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# COMPANIONS

OF MY

## SOLITUDE.

### CHAPTER I.

WHEN in the country, I live much alone: and, as I wander over downs and commons and hrough lanes with lofty hedges, many thoughts come nto my mind. I find, too, that the same ones come gain and again, and are spiritual companions. At imes they insist upon being with me, and are esolutely intrusive. I think I will describe them, hat so I may have more mastery over them. nstead of suffering them to haunt me as vague faces nd half-fashioned resemblances, I will make them nto distinct pictures, which I can give away, or hang p in my room, turning them, if I please, with their ces to the wall; and, in short, be free to do what I ke with them.

Ellesmere will then be able to deride them at his pleasure ; and so they will go through the alembic of sarcasm : Dunsford will have something more to approve, or rebuke ; Lucy something more to love, or to hate. Even my dogs and my trees will be the better for this work, as, when it is done, they will, perhaps, have a more disengaged attention from me. Faithful, steadfast creatures, both dogs and trees ; how easy and charming is your converse with me compared with the eager, exclusive, anxious way in which the creations of my own brain, who at least should have some filial love and respect for me, insist upon my attention.

It was a thoroughly English day to-day, sombre and quiet, the sky coming close to the earth, and everything seeming to be of one colour. I wandered over the downs, not heeding much which way I went, and driven by one set of thoughts which of late have had great hold upon me.

I think often of the hopes of the race here, of what is to become of our western civilisation, and what can be made of it. Others may pursue science or art, and I long to do so too ; but I cannot help thinking of the state and fortunes of large masses of mankind, and hoping that thought may do something for them.

After all my cogitations, my mind generally returns to one thing, the education of the people. For want of general cultivation how greatly individual excellence is crippled. Of what avail, for example, is it for any one of us to have surmounted any social terror, or any superstition, while his neighbours lie sunk in it? His conduct in reference to them becomes a constant care and burden.

Meditating upon general improvement, I often think a great deal about the climate in these parts of the world ; and I see that without much husbandry of our means and resources, it is difficult for us to be anything but low barbarians. The difficulty of living at all in a cold, damp, destructive climate is great. Socrates went about with very scanty clothing, and men praise his wisdom in caring so little for the goods of this life. He ate sparingly, and of mean food. That is not the way, I suspect, that we can make a philosopher here. There are people who would deride one for saying this, and would contend that it gives too much weight to worldly things. But I suspect they are misled by notions borrowed from Eastern climates. Here we must make prudence one of the substantial virtues.

One thing, though, I see, and that is, that there is a quantity of misplaced labour, of labour which is not



consumed in stern contest with the rugged world around us, in the endeavour to compel Nature to give us our birthright, but in fighting with "strong delusions" of all kinds; or rather in putting up obstacles which we laboriously knock down again, in making Chinese mazes between us and objects we have daily need of, and where we should have only the shortest possible line to go. As I have said elsewhere, half the labour of the world is pure loss—the work of Sisyphus rolling up stones to come down again inevitably.

Law, for example, what a loss is there; of time, of heart, of love, of leisure! There are good men whose minds are set upon improving the law; but I doubt whether any of them are prepared to go far enough. Here, again, we must hope most from general improvement of the people. Perhaps, though, some one great genius will do something for us. I have often fancied that a man might play the part of Brutus in the law. He might simulate madness in order to ensure freedom. He might make himself a great lawyer, rise to eminence in the profession, and then turn round and say, "I am not going to enjoy this high seat and dignity; but intend henceforward to be an advocate for the people of this country against the myriad oppressions and vexations of the

law. No Chancellorships or Chief-Justiceships for me. I have only pretended to be this slave in order that you should not say that I am an untried and unpractical man—that I do not understand your mysteries.”

This, of course, is not the dramatic way in which such a thing would be done. But there is greatness enough in the world for it to be done. If no lawyer rises up to fill the place which my imagination has assigned for him, we must hope that statesmen will do something for us in this matter, that they will eventually protect us (though, hitherto, they never have done so) from lawyers.

There are many things done now in the law at great expense by private individuals which ought to be done for all by officers of the State. It is as if each individual had to make a road for himself whenever he went out, instead of using the king's highway.

Many of the worst things in the profession take place low down in it. I am not sure that I would not try the plan of having public notaries with very extensive functions, subjecting them to official control. What exclamations about freedom we should hear, I daresay, if any large measure of this kind were proposed; which exclamations and their consequences have long been, in my mind, a chief obstacle to our

possessing the reality of freedom. What difference is it whether I am a slave to my lawyer, or subject indirectly to more official control in the changing of my property? I do not know a meaner and sadder portion of a man's existence, or one more likely to be full of impatient sorrow, than that which he spends in waiting at the offices of lawyers.

It is to be observed that all satire falls short when aimed against the practices in the law. No man can imagine, not Swift himself, things more shameful, absurd, and grotesque than the things which do take place daily in the law. Satire becomes merely narrative. A modern novelist depicts a man ruined by a legacy of a thousand pounds, and sleeping under a four-legged table, because it reminded him of the days when he used to sleep in a four-post bed. This last touch about the bed is humorous, but the substance of the story is dry narrative only.

These evils are not of yesterday, or of this country only; I observe that the first Spanish colonists in America write home to the Government begging them not to allow lawyers to come to the colony.

At the same time, we must not forget how many of the evils attributed solely to the proceedings of lawyers result from the want of knowledge of business in the world in general, and its inaptness for business.

the anxiety to arrange more and for longer time than is wise or possible, and the occasional trusting of affairs to women, who in our country are brought up to be utterly incompetent to the management of affairs. Still, with all these allowances, and taking care to admit, as we must, if we have any fairness, that notwithstanding the element of chicanery and perverse small-mindedness in which they are involved, there are many admirable and very high-minded men to be found in all grades of the law (perhaps a more curious instance of the power of the human being to maintain its structure unimpaired in the midst of a hostile element, than that a man should be able to abide in a heated oven)—admitting all these extenuating circumstances, we must nevertheless declare, as I set out by saying, that law affords a notable example of loss of time, of heart, of love, of leisure.\*

Well, then, as another instance of misplaced labour, I suppose we must take a good deal of what goes on in schools and colleges, and, indeed, in parliaments

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\* Many of the adjuncts and circumstances of the law are calculated to maintain it as a mystery : I allude to the uncouth form and size of deeds, the antiquated words, the unusual kind of handwriting. Physicians' prescriptions may have a better effect for being expressed mysteriously, but legal matters cannot surely be made too clear, even in the merest minutiae.

and other assemblages of men, not to speak of the wider waste of means and labour which prevails in all physical works—such as buildings, furniture, decorations; and not merely waste but obstruction, so that if there were a good angel attendant on the human race, with power to act on earth, it would destroy as fast as made a considerable portion of men's productions, as the kindest thing which could be done for man and the best instruction for him.

The truth is, we must considerably address ourselves to cope with Nature. Here again, too, we come to the want of more extended and general cultivation, for otherwise we cannot fully enjoy or profit by scientific discovery. At present a man in a civilised country is surrounded by things which are greater than he is; he does not understand them, cannot regulate them, cannot mend them.

This ignorance proceeds in some respects from division of labour. A man knows how to **make** a pin's head admirably, but is afraid to handle or give an opinion upon things which he has not daily knowledge of. This applies not only to physical things, but to law, church, state, and the arts and sciences generally.

After all, the advancement of the world depends upon the use of small balances of advantage over

disadvantage ; for there is compensation everywhere and in everything. No one discovery resuscitates the world ; certainly no physical one. Each new good thought, or word, or deed, brings its shadow with it ; and as I have just said, it is upon the small balances of gain that we get on at all. Often, too, this occurs indirectly, as when moral gains give physical gains, and these again give room for further moral and intellectual culture.

Frequently it seems as if the faculties of man were not quite adequate as yet to his situation. This is perhaps more to be seen in contemplating individuals than in looking at mankind in general. The individual seems the sport of circumstance. When Napoleon invaded Russia (the proximate cause of his downfall), though doubtless there were very adverse and unfortunate circumstances attendant upon that invasion, yet, upon the whole, it gave a good opportunity for working out the errors of the man's mind and system. The circumstances were not unfair, as we may say, against him. Most prosperous men, perhaps I should say most men, have in the course of their lives their campaign in Russia—when they strain their fortune to the uttermost, and often it breaks under them. I did not mean anything like this when I said that the individual seems the sport of circumstance. Neither

did I mean that small continuous faults and misdoings have considerable effect upon a man, such as the errors and vices of youth, which are silently put down to a man from day to day, like his reckoning at an inn. But I alluded to those very unfortunate concurrences of circumstances, which most men's lives will tell them of, where a man, from some small error or omission, from some light carelessness, or over-trust, in thoughtless innocence or inexperience, gets entangled in a web of adverse circumstances, which will be company for him on sleepless nights and anxious days throughout a large part of his life. Were success in life (morally or physically) the main object here, it certainly would seem as if a little more faculty in man were sadly needed. A similar thing occurs often to the body, when a man, from some small mischance or oversight, lays the beginning of a disease which shall depress and enfeeble him while he sojourns upon earth. And it seems, when he looks back, as if such a little thing would have saved him; if he had not crossed over the road, if he had not gone to see his friend on that particular day, if the dust had not been so unpleasant on that occasion, the whole course of his life would have been different. Living, as we do, in the midst of stern gigantic laws, which crush everything down that comes in their way,

which know no excuses, admit of no small errors, never send a man back to learn his lesson and try him again, but are as inexorable as Fate—living, I say, with such powers above us (unseen, too, for the most part), it does seem as if the faculties of man were hardly as yet adequate to his situation here.

Such considerations as the above tend to charity and humility ; and they point also to the existence of a future state.

As regards charity, for example, a man might extend to others the ineffable tenderness which he has for some of his own sins and errors, because he knows the whole history of them ; and though, taken at a particular point, they appear very large and very black, he knew them in their early days when they were play-fellows instead of tyrant demons. There are others which he cannot so well smooth over, because he knows that in their case inward proclivity coincided with outward temptation ; and, if he is a just man, he is well aware that if he had not erred here he would have erred there ; that experience, even at famine price, was necessary for him in those matters. But, in considering the misdoings and misfortunes of others, he may as well begin, at least, by thinking that they are of the class which he has found



from his own experience to contain a larger amount of what we call ill-fortune than of anything like evil disposition. For time and chance, says the Preacher, happen to all men.

Thus I thought in my walk this dull and dreary afternoon, till the rising of the moon and the return from school of the children with their satchels coming over the down warned me, too, that it was time to return home: and so, trying not to think any more of these things, I looked at the bare beech-trees, still beautiful, and the dull sheep-ponds scattered here and there, and thought that the country even in winter and in these northern regions, like a great man in adversity and just disgrace, was still to be looked at with hopeful tenderness, even if, in the man's case, there must also be somewhat of respectful condemnation. As I neared home I comforted myself, too, by thinking that the inhabitants of sunnier climes do not know how winning and joyful is the look of the chimney-tops of our homes in the midst of what to them would seem most desolate and dreary.

## CHAPTER II.

I SUPPOSE it has happened to most men who observe their thoughts at all, to notice how some expression returns again and again in the course of their meditations, or, indeed, of their business, forming as it were a refrain to all they think, or do, for any given day. Sometimes, too, this refrain has no particular concern with the thought or business of the day ; but seems as if it belonged to some under-current of thought and feeling. This at least is what I experienced to-day myself, being haunted by a bit of old Spanish poetry, which obtruded itself, sometimes inopportunately, sometimes not so, in the midst of all my work or play. The words were these :—

“ Quan presto se va el placer.  
Como despues de acordado  
Da dolor ;  
Como, al nuestro parecer,  
Qualquiera tiempo pasado  
Fué mejor.”

How quickly passes pleasure away.  
 How after being granted  
     It gives pain ;  
 How in our opinion  
 Any past time  
     Was better (than that we passed in pleasure).

It was not that I agreed with the sentiment, except as applied to vicious pleasure, being rather of Sydney Smith's mind, that the remembrance of past pleasure is present pleasure ; but I suppose the words chimed in with reflections on the past which formed the under-current of my thoughts, as I went through the wood of beeches which bounded my walk to-day.

A critique had just been sent me of some literary production, in which the reviewer was very gracious in noticing the calmness and moderation of the author. "Ah, my friend," thought I to myself, "how differently you would write if you did but know the man as I do, and were aware what a fierce fellow he is with all his outward smoothness, hardly ruling at times thoughts which are anything but calm and moderate, yet struggling to be just, and knowing that violence is always lost !"

From that I went on to consider how intense is the loneliness for the most part of any man who endeavours to think—like the Nile wandering on through a desert country, with no tributary streams to cheer and aid it,

and to be lost in sympathy with its main current. In politics, for example, such a man will have too affectionate a regard for the people to be a democrat ; he would as soon leave his own children without guidance ; and, on the other hand, he will have too great a regard for merit and fitness to be an aristocrat. He will find no one plank to walk up and down consistently ; and will be always looking beyond measures which satisfy other men ; and seeing perhaps that as regards politics themselves, greater things are to be done out of them than in them.

I was silent in thought for a moment, and then my refrain came back again—

“ *Qualquiera tiempo pasado  
Fué mejor.* ”

And in a moment I went back, not to the pleasures, but to the ambitious hopes and projects of youth. And when a man does reflect upon the ambitions which are as characteristic of that period of life as reckless courage or elastic step, and finds that at each stage of his journey since, some hope has dropped off as too burdensome, or too romantic, till at last it is enough for him only to carry himself at all upright in this troublesome world—what thoughts come back upon him ! How he meditates upon his own errors

and shortcomings, and sees that he has had not only the hardness, oiliness, and imperturbability of the world to contend with, but that he himself has generally been his worst antagonist.

In this mood, I might have thrown myself upon the mound under a green beech-tree that was near, the king of the woods, and uttered many lamentations; but instead of doing anything of the kind, I walked sedately by it; for as we go on in life, we find we cannot afford excitement, and we learn to be parsimonious in our emotions. Again I muttered,

“ Qualquiera tiempo pasado  
Fué mejor.”

And I threw forward these words into the future, as if I were already blaming any tendency to unnecessary emotion.

I entered now into another vein of thought, considering that kind Nature would not allow a man to be so very wise, nor, for the sake of any good he might do to others, permit him to forfeit the benefit he must derive from his own errors, failures, and shortcomings. You may mean well, she says, and you might expect that I should give you any extraordinary furtherance, and not suffer you to be plagued with drawbacks and errors of your own, that so you might do your

work undisturbed: but I love you too well for that. I sacrifice no one child for the benefit of the rest. You all must learn humility.

I felt the truth of these words, and thereupon gave myself up to more cheerful thoughts. How much cheerfulness there is, by the way, in humility. I listened to the cuckoo in the woods, hearing his tiresome but welcome noise for the first time in the year, and I looked out for the wild-flowers that were just beginning to show themselves, and thought that, from the names of flowers, it is evident that, in former days, poets and scholars must have lived in the country and looked well at Nature. Else how came all these picturesque and poetical names, "Love in idleness," "Venus's looking-glass," and such like?

But as the shades of evening came on in the wood, my thoughts went away from these simple topics; the refrain, too,

"*Quan presto se va el placer,*"

sounded in my ears again; and I passed on to meditations of like colour to those in the former part of my walk. In addition to the other hindrances I alluded to before, this also must come home to the mind of many a man of the present generation—how he is to discern, much more to teach, even in small

things, without having clear views, or distinct convictions, upon some of the greatest matters—upon religious questions for instance? And yet I suppose it must be tried. Even a man of Goethe's immense industry and great intellectual resources, feared to throw himself upon the sea of biblical criticism. But, at the same time, how poor, timid, and tentative must be all discourse built upon inferior motives. Ah, if we could but discern what is the right way and the highest way!

These doubts which beset men upon many of the greatest matters, are the direct result of the lies and falsification of our predecessors. Sometimes when we look at the frightful errors which metaphorical expressions may have introduced, I do not wonder that Plato spoke in the hardest manner of Poets. But man cannot narrate without metaphors, so much more does he see in every transaction than the bare circumstances.

When I was at Milan and saw the glory of that town, the Last Supper, by Leonardo da Vinci, I could not help thinking, as my way is, many things not, perhaps, very closely connected with that grand work, but which it suggested to my mind. At first you may be disappointed in finding the figures so much faded, but soon, with patient looking, much comes into

view; and after marvelling at the inexpressible beauty which still remains, you find to your astonishment that no picture, no print, perhaps no description, has adequately represented what you can still trace in this work. Not only has it not been represented, but it has been utterly misrepresented. The copyist thought he could tell the story better than the painter, and where the outlines are dim, was not content to leave them so, but must insert something of his own which is clearly wrong. This, I thought, is the way of most translation, and I might add, of most portrait-painting and nearly all criticism. And it occurred to me that the written history of the world was very like the prints of this fresco—namely, a clear account, a good deal of it utterly wrong, of what at first hand is considerably obliterated, and which, except in minds of the highest powers of imagination, to be a clear conception can hardly be a just one.

And then, carrying my application still further to the most important of all histories, I thought how the simple majesty of the original transaction had probably suffered a like misconception, from the fading of the material narrative, and still more from the weak inventions of those who could not represent accurately, and were impatient of any dimness (to their eyes) in the divine original.

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I often fancy how I should like to direct the intellectual efforts of men ; and if I had the power, how frequently I should direct them to those great subjects in metaphysics and theology which now men shun.

What patient labour and what intellectual power are often bestowed in coming to a decision on any cause which involves much worldly property. Might there not be some great hearing of any of the intellectual and spiritual difficulties which beset the paths of all thoughtful men in the present age?

Church questions, for example, seem to require a vast investigation. As it is, a book or pamphlet is put forward on one side, then another on the other side, and somehow the opposing facts and arguments seldom come into each other's presence. And thus truth sustains great loss.

My own opinion is, if I can venture to say that I have an opinion, that what we ought to seek for is a church of the utmost width of doctrine, and with the most beautiful expression that can be devised for that doctrine—the most beautiful expression, I mean, in words, in deeds, in sculpture, and in sacred song ; which should have a simple easy grandeur in its proceedings that should please the elevated and poetical mind, charm the poor, and yet not lie open to just cavilling on the part of those somewhat hard,

Intellectual worshippers who must have a reason for everything ; which should have vitality and growth in itself and which should attract and not repel those who seek the truth better than any creature.

Pondering these things in the silence of the downs, I at last neared home ; and found that the result of my thoughts was that any would-be teacher must be contented and humble, or try to be so, in his efforts of any kind ; and that if the great questions of life hardly be determined by man (divided, too, as he is from his brother in all ways) he must still try and do what he can on lower levels, hoping ever for more light, and looking forward to the knowledge which may be gained by death.

### CHAPTER III.

**T**O-DAY, as the weather was cold and boisterous, I could only walk under shelter of the yew hedge in my garden, which some gracious predecessor (all honour to him !) planted to keep off the dire north-west winds, and which, I fear, unless he was a very hardy plant himself, he did not live long enough to profit much by. Being so near home, my thoughts naturally took a domestic turn ; and I vexed myself by thinking that I had received no letter from my little boy. This was owing to the new post-office regulations, which did not allow letters to go out from country places, or be delivered at such places, on a Sunday. Oh those Borgias, said I to myself, how much we have to blame them for ! To be sure, I know pretty well what the letter would be.

“ I hope you are well papa and I send you my love and I have got a kite and Uncle George’s dog is very fierce. His name is Nero which was a Roman emperor nearly quite white only he has got two black

spots just over his nose And I send my love to  
mamma and the children and I am your own little  
boy and affectionate son,

“LEONARD MILVERTON.”

Not a very important, certainly not a very artistic, production this letter, but still it has its interest for the foolish paternal mind, and I should like to have received it to-day. It is greatly owing to those Borgias that I have not received this letter. Most of my neighbours imagine that their little petitions were the cause of these post-office regulations; but I beg to go somewhat further back, and I come to Pope Alexander the Sixth, and lay a great deal of blame on him. The pendulous folly of mankind oscillates as far in this direction as it has come from that; and an absurd Puritan is only a correlative to a wicked Pope.

From such reflections, I fell to considering Puritanism generally, and I am afraid I came to a different conclusion from that which would have been popular at any of the late public meetings; but then I console myself by an aphorism of Ellesmere's, who is wont to remark, “How exactly proportioned to a man's ignorance of the subject is the noise he makes about it at a public meeting.” Knowledge brings doubts and exceptions and limitations which, though occasionally

some aids to truth, are all hindrances to vigorous statement.

But to go back to what I thought about Puritanism—for I endeavoured to methodise my thoughts, and the following is the course they took.

What are the objects of life, as far as regards this world? Its first wants, I answer, namely, food and raiment. What besides? Marrying and the rearing of children; and, in general, the cultivation of the affections. So far Puritans would agree with us.

But suppose all these things to be tempered with gaiety and festivity: what element of wickedness has *necessarily* entered? None that I can perceive. Self-indulgence takes many forms; and we should bear in mind that there may be a sullen sensuality as well as a gay one.

But the truth is, there is a secret belief amongst some men that God is displeased with man's happiness; and in consequence they slink about creation, ashamed and afraid to enjoy anything.

They answer, we do not object to rational pleasures.

But who, my good people, shall exactly define rational pleasures? You are pleased with a flower; to cultivate flowers is what you call a rational pleasure: there are people, however, to whom a flower is somewhat insipid, but they perhaps dote upon music,

which, however, is unfortunately not one of your rational pleasures—chiefly, as I believe, because it is mainly a social one. Why is there anything *necessarily* wrong in social pleasures? Certainly some of the most dangerous vices, such as pride, are found to flourish in solitude with more vigour than in society ; and a man may be deadly avaricious who has never even gone out to a tea-party.

Once I happened to overhear a dialogue somewhat similar to that which Charles Lamb, perhaps, only feigned to hear. I was travelling in a railway-carriage with a most precise-looking formal person, the Arch-Quaker, if there be such a person. His countenance was very noble, or had been so, before it was frozen up. He said nothing : I felt a great respect for him. At last his mouth opened. I listened with attention : I had hitherto lived with foolish, gad-about, dinner-eating, dancing people : now I was going to hear the words of retired wisdom ; when he thus addressed his young daughter sitting opposite, “Hast thee heard how Southamptons went lately?” (in those days South-Western Railway shares were called Southamptons) ; and she replied with like gravity, giving him some information that she had picked up about Southamptons yesterday evening.

I leant back rather sickened as I thought what

was probably the daily talk and the daily thoughts in that family, from which I conjectured all amusement was banished save that connected with intense money-getting.

Well, but, exclaims the advocate of Puritanism, I do not admit that my clients, on abjuring the pleasures of this world, fall into pride, or sullen sensuality, or intense money-getting. They only secure to themselves more time for works of charity and for the love of God.

You are an adroit advocate, and are careful, by not pushing your case too far, to give me the least possible room for reply. They secure to themselves more time for these good works you say. Do they do them? But the truth is, in order to meet your remark and to extract the good there is in it, I must begin by saying that Puritanism, as far as it is an abnegation of self, is good, or may be so. But this is most surely the case, when it turns its sufferings and privations to utility. It has always appeared to me that there is so much to be done in this world, that all self-inflicted suffering which cannot be turned to good account for others, is a loss—a loss, if you may so express it, to the spiritual world.

The Puritanism which I object to is that which

avoids some pleasure, and exhausts in injurious comment and attack upon other people any leisure and force of mind which it may have gained by its abstinence from the pleasure.

I can understand and sympathise with the man who says, "I enjoy festivity, but I cannot go to the feast I am bidden to, to-night, for there are sick people who must be first attended to." But I do not love the man who stays away from the feast and employs his leisure in delivering a sour discourse on the wickedness of the others who are invited to the feast, and who go to it.

Moreover, this censoriousness is not only a sin, but the inventor of many sins. Indeed the manufacture of sins is so easy a manufacture, that I am convinced man could readily be persuaded that it was wicked to use the left leg as much as the right ; whole congregations would only permit themselves to hop ; and, what is more to our present point, would consider that when they walked in the ordinary fashion they were committing a deadly sin. Now, I should not think that the man who were to invent this sin would be a benefactor to the human race.

You often hear in a town or village, a bit of domestic history, which seems at first to militate against what I have been saying, but is in reality very



consistent with it. The story is of some poor man, and is apt to run thus:—He began to frequent the alehouse; he sought out amusements; there was a neighbouring fair where he first showed his quarrelsome disposition; then came worse things; and now here he is in prison. Yes, I should reply, he frequented, with a stealthy shame, those places which you, who would ignore all amusement, have suffered to be most coarse and demoralising. All along he had an exaggerated notion of the blame that he was justly liable to from his first steps in the downward path: the truth unfortunately is, that you go a long way to make a small error into a sin, when you mis-call it so. I would not, therefore, have a clergyman talk of the alehouse as if it were the pit of Acheron. On the contrary, I would have him acknowledge that, considering the warmth and cheerfulness to be found in the sanded parlour of the village inn, it is very natural that men should be apt to frequent it. I would have him, however, go on to show what frequenting the alehouse mostly leads to, and how the labourer's home might be made to rival the alehouse; and I would have him help to make it so, or, in some way, to provide some substitute for the alehouse.

The evils of competition are very considerable, and many people in these times hold up competition as

the great monster evil of the age. I do not know how that may be ; but I am sure that the competition there is in the way of puritanical demonstration is very injurious to sincerity. This competition is the child of fear. A is afraid that his neighbour B will not think well of him, because he (A) does or permits something which C, another neighbour, will not allow in his house. Surely this is little else than mere man-worship. It puts one in mind of the story of that congregation of the Church of England, who begged their clergyman to give them longer sermons—not that they were fond of long discourses—but that they might not always be out of church before some neighbouring congregation of Wesleyans or Independents.

Returning to the imaginary advocate for Puritanism who said that it secured more time for works of charity and for the love of God.

I do not know whether other people's observation will tally with mine ; but, as far as I have observed, it appears to me that charity requires the sternest labour and the most anxious thought ; that, in short, it is one of the most difficult things in the world, and is not altogether a matter for leisure hours. This remark applies to the more serious functions of charity. But, we must remember, that the whole of charity is not comprised in carrying about gifts to one another,

or, to speak more generally, in remedying the material evils suffered by those around us, else life would indeed be a dreary affair; but there are exquisite little charities to be performed in reference to social pleasures.

Then, as to the love of God, I do not venture to say much upon so solemn a theme; but it does occur to me that we should talk and think very humbly about our capacity in matters so much above us. At any rate, I do not see why the love of God should withdraw us largely from our fellow-man. That love we believe was greatest in Him who graced with His presence the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee; who was never known to shun or ignore the existence of the vicious; and to whom, more than to all other teachers, the hypocrite seems to have been particularly odious.

But there is another very important consideration to be weighed by those who are fearful of encouraging amusements, especially amongst their poorer brethren. What are the generality of people to do, or to think of, for a considerable portion of each day, if they are not allowed to busy themselves with some form of recreation? Here is this infinite creature, man, who looks before and after, whose swiftness of thought is

such, even among the dullest of the species, as would perhaps astonish the brightest, who are apt to imagine that none think but themselves ; and you fancy that he can be quite contented with providing warmth and food for himself and those he has to love and cherish. Food and warmth ! Content with that ! Not he : and we should greatly despise him if he could be. Why is it that in all ages small towns and remote villages have fostered little malignities of all kinds ? The true answer is, that people will backbite one another to any extent rather than not be amused. Nay, so strong is this desire for something to go on that may break the monotony of life, that people, not otherwise ill-natured, are pleased with the misfortune of their neighbours, solely because it gives something to think of, something to talk about. They imagine how the principal actors and sufferers concerned in the misfortune will bear it ; what they will do ; how they will look ; and so the dull bystander forms a sort of drama for himself. He would, perhaps, be told that it is wicked for him to go to such an entertainment : he makes one out for himself, not always innocently.

You hear clergymen in country parishes denouncing the ill-nature of their parishioners : it is in vain : the better sort of men try to act up to what they are told,

but really it is so dull in the parish that a bit of scandal is welcome to the heart. These poor people have nothing to think about; nature shows them comparatively little, for art and science have not taught them to look behind the scenes, or even at the scenes; literature they know nothing of; they cannot have gossip about the men of the past (which is the most innocent kind of gossip), in other words, read and discuss history; they have no delicate handiwork to amuse them; in short, talk they must, and talk they will, about their neighbours, whose goings on are a perpetual puppet-show to them.

But, to speak more gravely, man, even the most sluggish-minded man, craves amusement of some kind; and his wiser and more powerful brethren will show their wisdom, or their want of it, in the amusements they contrive for him.

We need not be afraid that in England any art or innocent amusement will be cultivated too much. The genius of the people, though kindly, is severe. And that is why there is so much less danger of their being injured, if any one is, by recreation. Cyrus kept the Lydians tame, we are told, by allowing them to cultivate music; the Greeks were perhaps prevented from becoming dominant by a cultivation of many arts; but the Anglo-Saxons, like the Romans, can

afford to cultivate art and recreations of all kinds. Such pursuits will not tame them too much. To contend, occasionally, against the bent of the genius, or the circumstances of a people, is one of the great arts of statesmanship. The same thing which is to be dreaded in one place is to be cultivated in another; here a poison, there an antidote.

The above is what I thought in reference to Puritanism during my walk this evening: then, by a not uneasy diversion of mind, I turned to another branch of small persecutions—small do I call them? perhaps they are the greatest that are endured, certainly the most vexatious. I mean all that is perpetuated by the tyranny of the weak.

This is a most fertile subject, and has been nearly neglected. Weak is a relative term: whenever two people meet, one is comparatively weak and the other strong; the relation between them is often supposed to imply this. Taking society in general, there is a certain weakness of the kind I mean, attributable to the sick, the spoilt, the ill-tempered, the unfortunate, the aged, women, and the clergy. Now I venture to say, there is no observant man of the world, who has lived to the age of thirty, who has not seen numerous instances of severe tyranny exercised by persons belonging to one or other of these classes; and which

tyranny has been established, continued, and endured, solely by reason of the weakness, real or supposed, of the persons exercising it. Talking once with a thoughtful man on this subject, he remarked to me, that, of course, the generous suffered much from the tyranny I was speaking of, as the strength of it was drawn from their strength. It might be compared to an evil government of a rich people, in which their riches furnished forth abundant armies wherewith to oppress the subject.

In quiet times this tyranny is very great. I have often thought whether it was not one very considerable compensation for rude hard times, or times of dire alarm, that domestic tyranny was then probably less severe: and among the various forms of domestic tyranny none occupies a more distinguished place than this of the tyranny of the weak over the strong.

If you come to analyse it, it is a tyranny exercised by playing upon the good-nature, the fear of responsibility, the dread of acting selfishly, the horror of giving pain, prevalent among good and kind people. They often know that it is a tremendous tyranny they are suffering under, and they do not feel it the less because they are consenting parties.

Meditating sometimes upon the results of this

tyranny, I have thought to myself, what is to stop it? In a state of further developed Christianity, unless, indeed, it were equally developed in all minds, there may be only more room for this tyranny. And then this strange, but perhaps just idea came into my mind, that this tyranny would fall away in a state of clearer knowledge such as might accompany another state of being; for then, the secrets of men's hearts not being profoundly concealed by silence, or by speech, it would be seen what the sufferers thought of these tyrannous proceedings; and the tyrants would shrink back, abashed at the enormity of their requisitions, made visible in the clear mirror of another's mind.

A common form of this tyranny is where the tyrant uses a name of great potency, such as that of some relationship, and having performed few or none of the duties, exacts from the other side a most oppressive tribute—oppressive, even if the duties had been performed.

There is one reason for putting a limit to the subserviency of the strong to the weak, which reason, if fully developed, might do more at times to protect the strong from the weak than anything I know. Surely the most foolish strong person must occasionally have glimpses that he or she cannot sacrifice



himself or herself alone : that, in dealing with another person, you are in some measure representing the outer world ; and ought (to use an official phrase) to govern yourself accordingly. We see this in managing children : and the most weakly indulgent people find that they must make a stop somewhere ; with some perception, it is to be hoped, that the world will not go on dealing with the children as they (the indulgent persons) are doing ; and, therefore, that they are preparing mischief and discomfort on one side or the other for parties who are necessarily to be brought in contact.

The soft mud carried away by the encroaching sea cannot say—"I, the soft mud, am to be the only victim to this element ; and after I am gone it will no more encroach." No, it means to devour the whole land if it can.

Ah, thought I to myself, how important are such considerations as those I have had to-day, if we could but rightly direct them ; how much of the health and wealth of the world depend upon them ! Even in those periods when "laws or kings" could do predominant good or predominant ill, the miseries of private life perhaps outweighed the rest ; but now, as civilisation advances, the tendency is to some little

melioration of great political dangers ; while, at the same time, from more refinement, more intricacy of affairs, more nervous development, more pretence of goodness, more resolve to have everything quite neat and smooth and safe, the miseries which the generality of men make for themselves do not tend to decrease, unless kept down by a continual growth of wise and good thoughts and just habits of mind.

When we talk of

“The ills that laws or kings can cause or cure,”

our thoughts refer only to the functions of direct and open government ; but the laws which regulate the intercourse of society, public opinion, and, in short, that almost impalpable code of thought and action which grows up in a very easy fashion between man and man, and is clothed with none of the ordinary dress of power, may yet be the subtlest and often the sternest despotism.

It is a strange fancy of mine, but I cannot help wishing we could “move for returns,” as their phrase is in Parliament, of the suffering caused in any one day, or other period of time, throughout the world, to be arranged under certain heads ; and we should then see what the world has occasion to fear most. What a large amount would come under the heads of

unreasonable fear of others, of miserable quarrels amongst relations upon infinitesimally small subjects, of imaginary slights, of undue cares, of false shames, of absolute misunderstandings, of unnecessary pains to maintain credit or reputation, of vexation that we cannot make others of the same mind with ourselves. What a wonderful thing it would be to see set down in figures, as it were, how ingenious we are in plaguing one another. My own private opinion is, that the discomfort caused by injudicious dress, worn entirely in deference, as it has before been remarked, to the most foolish of mankind, in fact to the tyrannous majority, would outweigh many an evil that sounds very big.

Tested by these perfect returns, which I imagine might be made by the angelic world, if they regard human affairs, perhaps our every-day shaving, severe shirt-collars, and other ridiculous garments, are equivalent to a great European war once in seven years ; and we should find that women's stays did about as much harm, *i.e.*, caused as much suffering, as an occasional pestilence—say, for instance, the cholera. We should find perhaps that the vexations arising from the income-tax were nearly equal to those caused amongst the same class of sufferers by the ill-natured things men fancy have been said behind their backs : and perhaps the

whole burden and vexation resulting from the aggregate of the respective national debts of that unthrifty family, the European race—the whole burden and vexation, I say, do not come up to the aggregate of annoyances inflicted in each locality by the one ill-natured person who generally infests each little village, parish, house, or community.

There is no knowing what strange comparisons and discoveries I should in my fancy have been led to—perhaps that the love, said to be inherent in the softer sex, of having the last word, causes as much mischief as all the tornadoes of the Tropics ; or that the vexation inflicted by servants on their masters by assuring them that such and such duties do not belong to their place, is equivalent to all the sufferings that have been caused by mad dogs since the world began. But my meditations were suddenly interrupted and put to flight by a noise, which, in describing afterwards in somewhat high-flown terms, I said caused a dismay like that which would have been felt if, neglectful of the proper periods in history, the Huns, the Vandals, and the Visigoths, in fact the unruly population of the world, had combined together and rushed down upon some quiet, orderly cathedral town.

In short, the children of my neighbours returning from school had dashed into my field, their main

desire being to behold an arranged heap of stones and brick-bats which, after being diligently informed of the fact several times by my son Leonard, I had learnt was a house he had lately built.

There is a sort of freemasonry among children ; for these knew at once that this heap of stones was a house, and danced round it with delight as a great work of art. Now, do you suppose, to come back to the original subject of my meditations to-day, that the grown-up child does not want amusement, when you see how greedy children are of it? Do not imagine we grow out of that : we disguise ourselves by various solemnities ; but we have none of us lost the child-nature yet.

I was glad to see how merry the children could be, though looking so blue and cold, and still more pleased to find that my presence did not scare them away, and that they have no grown-up feeling as yet about trespassing : I fled, however, from the noise into more quiet quarters, and broke up the train of reflections of which I now give these outlines, hoping they may be of use to some one.

## CHAPTER IV.

MUCH retrospect is not a very safe or a very wise thing : still there are times when a man may do well to look back upon his past life, and endeavour to take a comprehensive view of it. And whether such retrospect is wise or not, it cannot be avoided, as our reveries must sometimes turn upon that one life, our own, respecting which we have a great number of facts very interesting to us, and thoroughly within our ken. The process is curiously different from that pursued by Alnaschar in the "Arabian Nights," who with an imaginary spurn, alas, too well interpreted by a real gesture, disposed at once of all his splendid fortunes gained in reverie. In this progress of retrospection many find that the spurn is real as well as the fatal gesture which realised it, only both have been administered by the rude world instead of by themselves ; the fragments of their broken pottery lie around them ; and, going back to fond memories of the past, they have to reconstruct the original reverie—the dream of their

youth—the proud purpose of their manhood—how fulfilled ! .

Walking up and down amidst the young fir-trees in the little plantation to the north-east of the garden, and, occasionally, with all the interest of a young planter, stopping in front of a particular tree, and inspecting this year's growth, I got into such a train of retrospect as I have just spoken of : and from that, by a process which will be visible to the reader, was soon led into thoughts about the future.

I pictured to myself a descendant of mine, a man of dilapidated fortune, but still owning this house and garden. The few adjoining fields he will long ago have parted with. But he loves the place, having been brought up here by his sad, gentle mother, and having lived here with his young sister, then a rapturous imaginative girl, his companion and delight. Through the smallness of their fortune, and consequently the narrow circle of their acquaintances, she will have married a man totally unfit for her ; the romance of her nature has turned somewhat sour ; and, though occasionally high-minded, she is very peevish now, and is no longer the companion that she was to her brother. He just remembers his father pacing with disturbed step under these trees which I am now walking about. He recollects before

his father's death, how eagerly the fond wife used to waylay and open large packets, which she would not always bring to the dying man's bed. He now knows them to have been law papers; and when he thinks of these things, he utters harsh words about the iniquity of the law in England; and says something about law growing in upon a fallen estate like fungus upon old and failing wood.

These things are now long past: they occurred in his childhood. His mother is dead, and lies in that quiet churchyard in the wood, where, if I mistake not, one of his ancestors will also have found a peaceful resting-place. The house has fully partaken of the falling fortunes of its successive owners. The furniture is too old and worn for any new comer to be tempted to occupy the house; and the little garden is let to a market-gardener. Strawberries will grow then on the turf where I am now walking, and which John, after mowing it twice in the week, and having spent all his time in its vicinity, from working-day morning till working-day night, comes to look at on a Sunday, and, with his hands in his pockets and himself arrayed in a waistcoat too bright almost to behold, surveys intently, as if it were one of the greatest products of human invention. And John need not be ashamed of this single-minded delight in his work,



for, though it is nothing remarkable in England, the whole continent of Europe does not probably afford such a well-shaven bit of grass : and, as for our love of gardens, it is the last refuge of art in the minds and souls of many Englishmen : if we did not care for gardens, I hardly know what in the way of beauty we should care for. Well, this has all ceased by that time to be pleasure-garden, and I fear to think of the profane cabbages which will then occupy this trim velvety little spot. I hope that poor John, from some distant place, will not behold the profanation.

I have lingered on these details ; but I must now bring my distant descendant nearer to us. He will live in some large town, getting his bread in a humble way, and will sometimes steal down here, pretending to want to know whether anybody has applied to take the tumble-down place. This is what he says to his wife (for, of course, being so poor, this foolish Milverton has married), but she understands him better than to be deceived by that.

He has just made one of these excursions, having, for economy's sake and a wish to avoid the neighbours, got out at a station ten miles off (our cathedral town), and walked over to his house. It is evening, and he has just arrived. Tired as he is, he takes a turn round the garden, and after a long-drawn sigh,

which I know well the words for, he enters the house. The market-gardener lives in it, and his wife takes care of the master's rooms. She has lighted a fire : the smoke hardly ascends, but still there is warmth enough to call out much of the 'latent dampness of the apartment. The things about him are somewhat cheerless certainly, but he would not wish them to be otherwise. They would be very inharmonious if they were. During his meagre supper he is entertained with an account of the repairs that must be looked to. The water comes in here, and part of the wall has fallen down there ; and farmer Smith says (the coarse woman need not have repeated the very words) that if Mr Milverton is too poor to mend his own fence, he, farmer Smith, must do it himself. Patiently the poor man appears to attend to all this, but is thinking all the while of his pale mother, and of his wondering, as a child, why she never used to look up when horse or man went by, as she sat working at that bay window, and getting his clothes ready for school.

At last the market-gardener's wife, little attended to, bounces out of the room ; and her abrupt departure rouses my distant descendant to think of ways and means. And here I cannot help, as if I were present at the reverie, breaking in and saying, " Do not cut

down that yew-tree in the back garden, the stately well-grown one which was an ancient tree in my time." But no, upon second thoughts, I will say nothing of the kind. "Cut it down, cut them all down, dear distant descendant, rather than let little tradesmen want their money, or do the least dishonourable thing."

Apparently the present question of ways and means is settled somehow, for he rises and paces about the room. In a corner there lies an aged Parliamentary report, a remnant from my old library, the bulk of which has long been sold. It is the report of a Select Committee upon the effect on prices of the influx of Californian gold. There are some side-notes which he takes to have been mine; and this makes him think of me—not very kindly. These are his thoughts—This ancestor of mine, I see he busied himself about many worldly things; it is not likely that, taking an interest in such affairs, he would not have cared to have some hand in managing them; I conjecture that indeed, if only from one saying of his, that the bustle of life, if good for little else, at least keeps some sadness down at the bottom of the heart; and yet I do not find that our estate prospered much under him. He might now, if he had been a prosperous

gentleman, have bought some part of Woodcot chase (which was sold in his time and is now all building-ground), and I should not have been in this cursed plight.

“Distant descendant, do not let misfortune make you, as it so often does make men, ungenerous.”

He feels this and resumes. I wonder why he did not become rich and great. I suspect he was very laborious. (“You do me full justice there.”) I suppose he was very versatile, and did not keep to one thing at a time. (“You do me injustice there ; for I was always aware how much men must limit their efforts to effect anything.”) In his books he sometimes makes shrewd worldly remarks which show he understood something of the world, and he ought to have mastered it.

“Now, my dear young relative, allow me to say that last remark of yours upon character is a very weak one. Admitting, for the sake of argument, that ~~what you~~ urge in ~~my~~ favour be true, you must know ~~that~~ the people who write shrewdly are often the most easy to impose upon, or have been so. I almost suspect, without, however, having looked into the ~~matter~~, that Rochefoucauld was a tender lover, a warm friend, and, in general, a dupe (happy for him) to all the impulses and affections which he would have us

imagine he saw through and had mastered. The simple write shrewdly : but do not describe what they do. And the hard and worldly would be too wise in their generation to write about what they practise, even if they perceived it, which they seldom do, lacking delicacy of imagination."

Perhaps (he continues) this ancestor of mine had no ambition, and did not care about anything but that unwholesome scribbling ("ungracious again, distant descendant !") which has brought us in but little produce of any kind.

Dear distant kinsman, now it is my turn to speak : now listen to me ; and I will show you the family failing, not a very uncommon one, which has reduced us by degrees to this sad state ; for we, your ancestors, look on and suffer with you.

I am afraid we must own that we were of that foolish class of men who never can say a hearty good word for themselves. You might put a Milverton in the most favourable position in the world, you might have made him a bishop in George the Second's time, or a minister to a Spanish king in the seventeenth century, and still he would have contrived to shuffle awkwardly out of wealth and dignities, when the right time came for self-assertion, and for saying a stout word for his own cause, or for that of his kith and kin.

“Vox faucibus hæsit;” the poor, simple fellow was almost inaudible; and, muttering something, was supposed to say just that which he did not. I foresaw, therefore, that unless some Milverton were by good fortune to marry into a sturdy, pushing family (which would be better for him than any amount of present fortune), it was all over with the race, as far as worldly prosperity is concerned. And so it seems to be. If you feel that you are free from this defect, I will insure you fortune. Talk of cutting down the yew-tree; not a stick of the plantation need be touched, and I already see deep belts of new wood rise round newly-gained acres. Only be sure that you really can stand up stoutly for yourself.

I see what you are thinking of—that passage in Bacon (and it pleases me to find that you are so far well read, though you have sold the books) where he says that there are occasions when a man needs a friend to do or say for him what he never can do or say so well, or even at all, for himself. True: but, my simple-minded relative, have you lived to the age of twenty-seven, and not discovered that Phoenixes and Friends are creatures of the least prolific nature? Not that, adopting your misanthropic mood, I would say that there are no such creatures as friends, and that they are not potent for good. A man’s friend,

however, is ill, or travelling, or powerless ; but good self-assurance is always within call.

You are mute : you feel then that you are guilty too. Be comforted ; perhaps there is some island of the blest where there will be no occasion for pushing. Once this happened to me, that a great fierce obdurate crowd were pushing up in long line towards a door which was to lead them to some good thing ; and I, not liking the crowd, stole out of it, having made up my mind to be last, and was leaning indolently against a closed-up side door : when, all of a sudden, this door opened, and I was the first to walk in, and saw arrive long after me the men who had been thrusting and struggling round me. This does not often happen in the world, but I think there was a meaning in it.

But now no more about me. We have to think what is to be done in your case.

You labour under a retiring disposition, you are married, and you wish to retrieve the family fortunes. This is a full and frank statement of your case, and there is no doubt that it is a very bad one, requiring wise and energetic remedies. First, you must at once abandon all those pursuits which depend for success upon refined appreciation. You must seek to do something which many people demand. I cannot illustrate

What I mean better than by telling you what I often tell my publisher, whenever he speaks of the slackness of trade. There is a confectioner's shop next door, which is thronged with people : I beg him (the publisher) to draw a moral from this, and to set up, himself, an eating-house. That would be appealing to the million in the right way. I tell him he could hire me and others of his "eminent hands" to cook instead of to write, and then, instead of living on our wits (slender diet indeed !), we ourselves should be able to buy books, and should become great patrons of literature. I did not tell him, because it is not wise to run down authors in the presence of publishers, what I may mention to you, that many of us would be much more wisely and wholesomely employed in cooking than in writing. But this is nothing to you. What I want you, dear distant kinsman, to perceive, is, that you must at once cultivate something which is in general demand. Emigrate, if you like, and cultivate the ground. Cattle are always in some demand, if only for tallow. It is better to provide the fuel for the lamp than those productions which are said to smell most of it. I cannot enter into details with you ; because I do not foresee what will be the flourishing trades in your time. I can only give you general advice.



One of the great aids, or hindrances, to success in anything lies in the temperament of a man. I do not know yours ; but I venture to point out to you what is the best temperament, namely, a combination of the desponding and the resolute, or, as I had better express it, of the apprehensive and the resolute. Such is the temperament of great commanders. Secretly, they rely upon nothing and upon nobody. There is such a powerful element of failure in all human affairs, that a shrewd man is always saying to himself, what shall I do, if that which I count upon does not come out as I expect. This foresight dwarfs and crushes all but men of great resolution.

Then be not over-choice in looking out for what may exactly suit you ; but rather be ready to adopt any opportunities that occur. Fortune does not stoop often to take any one up. Favourable opportunities will not happen precisely in the way that you have imagined. Nothing does. Do not be discouraged, therefore, by a present detriment in any course which may lead to something good. Time is so precious here.

Get, if you can, into one or other of the main grooves of human affairs. It is all the difference of going by railway, and walking over a ploughed field, whether you adopt common courses, or set up one for

yourself. You will see, if your times are anything like ours, very inferior persons highly placed in the army, in the church, in office, at the bar. They have somehow got upon the line, and have moved on well with very little original motive power of their own. Do not let this make you talk as if merit were utterly neglected in these or any professions : only that getting well into the groove will frequently do instead of any great excellence.

My sarcastic friend, Ellesmere, whom you will probably know by repute as a great Chief Justice or Lord Chancellor, says, with the utmost gravity, that no man with less than a thousand pounds a year (I wonder whether in your times you will think that a large or a small income) can afford to have private opinions upon certain important subjects. He admits that he has known it done upon eight hundred a year ; but only by very prudent people with small families.

But the night is coming on, and I feel, my dear descendant, as if I should like to say something more solemn to you than these worldly maxims.

Whatever happens, do not be dissatisfied with your worldly fortunes, lest the speech be justly made to you which was once made to a repining person much given to talk of how great she and hers had been.

“ Yes, madam,” was the crushing reply, “ we all find our level at last.”

Eternally that fable is true, of a choice being given to men on their entrance into life. Two majestic women stand before you : one in rich vesture, superb, with what seems like a mural crown on her head and plenty in her hand, and something of triumph, I will not say of boldness, in her eye ; and she, the queen of this world, can give you many things. The other is beautiful, but not alluring, nor rich, nor powerful ; and there are traces of care and shame and sorrow in her face ; and (marvellous to say) her look is down-cast and yet noble. She can give you nothing, but she can make you somebody. If you cannot bear to part from her sweet sublime countenance, which hardly veils with sorrow its infinity, follow her : follow her, I say, if you are really minded so to do ; but do not, while you are on this track, look back with ill-concealed envy on the glittering things which fall in the path of those who prefer to follow the rich dame, and to pick up the riches and honours which fall from her cornucopia.

This is in substance what a true artist said to me only the other day, impatient, as he told me, of the complaints of those who would pursue art, and yet would have fortune.

But, indeed, all moral writings teem with this remark in one form or other. You cannot have inconsistent advantages. Do not shun this maxim because it is commonplace. On the contrary, take the closest heed of what observant men, who would probably like to show originality, are yet constrained to repeat. Therein lies the marrow of the wisdom of the world. Such things are wiser than proverbs, which are seldom true except for the occasion on which they are used, and are generally good to strengthen a resolve rather than to enlighten it.

These latter words of mine fall upon an inattentive ear ; for my distant descendant, who has been gradually becoming more composed during the progress of this moral essay, at last falls quite asleep. Perhaps the great triumph of all moral writings, including sermons, is, that at least they have produced some sweet and innocent sleep.

Poor fellow ! I now see how careworn he seems, though not without some good looks, which he owes to his great-great-great-grandmother, of whom, as he lies there, he puts me much in mind. He ought to thank me for those good looks, and to admit that winning some beauty for the family is at least as valuable as that Woodcot chase which he thinks I ought to have laid hold of. But our unfair de-

scendants never think of anything in our favour : this gout and that asthma and those mortgages are all remembered against us ; we hear but little on the other side.

Sleep on, dear distant progeny of mine, and I will keep the night watches of your anxious thought.

## CHAPTER V.

THESE companions of my solitude, my reveries, take many forms. Sometimes, the nebulous stuff out of which they are formed, comes together with some method and set purpose, and may be compared to a heavy cloud—then they will do for an essay or moral discourse; at other times, they are merely like those sportive disconnected forms of vapour which are streaked across the heavens, now like a feather, now like the outline of a camel, doubtless obeying some law and with some design, but such as mocks our observation; at other times again, they arrange themselves like those fleckered clouds, where all the heavens are regularly broken up in small divisions, lying evenly over each other with light between each. The result of this last-mentioned state of reverie is well brought out in conversation: and so I am going to give the reader an account of some talk which I had lately with my friend Ellesmere.

Once or twice before I have used this name

Ellesmere, as if it were familiar to others as to myself. It is to be found in a book edited, as it appears, by a neighbouring clergyman, named Dunsford, who was obliging and laborious enough to set down some conversations in which he, Ellesmere, and myself took part ; and which he called " Friends in Council." There is no occasion to refer to this book to understand Ellesmere : a man soon shows himself by his talk, if he does by anything. Moreover the average reader will find the book a somewhat sober, not to say dull affair, embracing such questions as slavery, government, management of the poor, and such like. The reader, however, who is not the average reader, may perhaps find something worth agreeing with, or differing from, in the book.

I flatter myself that last sentence is very skilful. The poor publisher, or rather his head man, complains sadly that not even the usual amount of advertisement, not to speak of puffing, is allowed to him ; the good clergyman having a peculiar aversion to such modes of dealing, and believing that good books, if there were such things, should be sought after, and not poked in the faces of purchasers like Jews' penknives at coach doors. By this delicate piece of flattery, for each reader will secretly conclude that he is above the average and hasten to buy the

book, I shall have done more than many puffs direct. Therefore be at ease, man of business, the avenues to thy shop will be thronged. I can utter this prophecy with the more confidence as the shop in question is in the high road to the Great Exhibition.

Well, my friend, Ellesmere was with me for a day ; we were lounging about the garden ; the great black dog which I always let loose when Ellesmere is here, to please him, was slowly following us to and fro, hanging out his large tongue, and wishing we would sit down, but still not being able to resist following us about ; when Ellesmere suddenly interrupted something I was saying with these words, "The question between us almost comes to this : you want a sheep-dog. I am satisfied with a watch-dog—Rollo will do for me ; and, as you see, he is content with my approbation."

This abrupt speech requires some explanation. I had been talking about some matters connected with statesmanship, and stricturing, perhaps too severely, some recent acts of government, in which, as I said, I detected some of the worst habits of modern policy—a mixture of rashness and indecision—meddling and doing nothing—spending, as I added, most of the powder for the flash in the pan. Then I went on to deplore, that always statesmanship appeared to



come upon the stage too late. Is nothing ever to be done in time? \*

A good deal of what I said is true, I think, but ought to be taken "cum grano," as they say ; for men who have lived a good deal in active life, and are withdrawn from it, are apt to comment too severely on the conduct of those who are left behind. They forget the difficulty of getting anything done in this perplexed world, and their own former difficulties in that way are softened by distance. It was well that Ellesmere interrupted me. The conversation thus proceeded.

*Milverton.* Yes, that is the point. I confess I should like something of the sheep-dog in a ruler. I think we, of all nations, can bear judicious interference and regulation ; we should not be cramped by it.

*Ellesmere.* In a representative government is the folly of the governed to find no place?

*Milverton.* Yes, but, my good friend, you need not be anxious to provide for that. Folly will find a place even at the side of princes. That was the thing symbolised by great men's jesters. But, putting

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\* Written in 1850.

sarcasm aside, Ellesmere, I don't mean to blame present men so much as present doctrines and systems.\* Some of the men in power, or likely to be, in this country, are very honest, capable, brave men, full of desire to do good. But they have too little power, or rather, they meet with too much obstruction. Now, it is not wise to swathe a creature up like a foreign baby, and then say, Exert yourself, govern us, let there be no delay.

*Ellesmere.* The amount of obstruction is over-estimated. If a ruling man wanted to do anything good, I think he could do it, though I do admit that there are large powers of obstruction to be encountered.

*Milverton.* I do believe you are right. A statesman might venture to be greater and bolder than his position or apparent power quite warrants. And if he were to fall, he would fall—and there an end.

*Ellesmere.* And no such great damage either.

*Milverton.* But to return to your watch-dog and sheep-dog. There are two things very different demanded from statesmen: one, carrying on the routine of office; the other, originating measures, setting the limits within which private exertion should act. You do not mean to contend, Ellesmere, that it would not have been wise for a government to have

interfered with railway legislation earlier and more efficiently than it did.

*Ellesmere.* No—few people know better than I do the immense loss of time, money, labour, temper, and happiness which might have been saved in that matter.

*Milverton.* Now look again on Sanitary measures. Consider the years it has taken, and, for aught I know, may yet take, to get a Smoke Prohibition Bill passed. If such a thing is wise and possible, let us have it; if not, tell us it cannot be done. I have taken instances in physical things just as they occurred to me: I might have alluded to higher matters which are left in the same way, to see what will happen, to wait for the breezes, perhaps the storms, of popular agitation.

*Ellesmere.* People in authority are as fearful of attacking any social evil as men are of cutting down old trees about their houses. There is always something, however, to be said for the old trees.

*Milverton.* It would mostly be better, though, to cut them down at once, and begin to plant something at the proper distance from their houses.

*Ellesmere.* Well, Milverton, there is one thing you must remember, and that is, that intelligent men writing or talking about government are apt to fancy

themselves, or such men as themselves, in power; and so are inclined to be very liberal in assigning the limits of that power. Let them fancy some of the foolish people they know in this imaginary position of great power; and then see how the intelligent men begin to shudder at the thought of this power, and to desire very secure limits for it, and very narrow space for its exercise.

*Milverton.* Intelligent public opinion will in these days prevent vigorous action in a minister from hardening into despotism.

*Ellesmere.* Please repeat that again, my friend. "Intelligent public opinion?" Were those the words? did I catch them rightly?

*Milverton.* You did. There is such a thing, Ellesmere. It is not the first opinion heard in the country; it is not always loud on the hustings; but surely there are a great number of persons in a country like this, who try to think, and eventually form intelligent public opinion.

*Ellesmere.* I am afraid they are not a very active body.

*Milverton.* Not the most active; but they come in at some time.

*Ellesmere.* I do not wish to be impertinent, but do any of these people who ultimately (ultimately, I like

that word) form intelligent public opinion, live in the country? I can imagine a retired wisdom in some Court in London, say Pump Court for instance, but I cannot fancy the blowsy wisdom of the country.

*Milverton.* Now, Ellesmere, do not be provoking.

*Ellesmere.* I am all gravity again: but just allow me to propound one little theory, namely, that it is when the retired wisdom of town is revived by country air (on a visit) that it is apt to develop itself into—what is it?—oh—“intelligent public opinion.”

*Milverton.* Now, as you have had your joke, I will proceed. I have a theory that the temperament and habits of mind of individual statesmen have a good deal to do with government. I do not yet believe that we are all compounded into some great machine of which you can exactly calculate the results.

*Ellesmere.* What is your pet temperament for a statesman?

*Milverton.* That is a large question: one thing I should be inclined to say, with respect to his habit of mind—he should doubt till the last, and then act like a man who has never doubted.

*Ellesmere.* Cleverly put, but untrue, after the fashion of you maxim-mongers. He should not act like a man who has never doubted, but like a man

who was in the habit of doubting till he had received sufficient information. He should not convey to you the idea of a man who was given to doubt, or not to doubt; but of one who could wait till he had inquired.

*Milverton.* Your criticism is just. Well, then, another thing which occurs to me respecting his habits of mind is, that he should be one of those people who are not given to any system, and yet who have an exceeding love of improvement and disposition to regulate.

*Ellesmere.* That is good. I distrust systems. I find that men talk of principles; and mean, when you come to inquire, rules connected with certain systems.

*Milverton.* This enables me to bring my notions of government interference to a point. It should be a principle in a statesman's mind that he should not interfere so as to deaden private action: at the same time he should be profoundly anxious that right and good should be done, and consequently not fear to undertake responsibility. He should not be entrapped, mentally, into any system of policy which held him to interfere here, or not to interfere there; but he should be inclined to look at each case on its own merits. This is very hard work. Systems save trouble—the trouble of thinking.

*Ellesmere.* There is some sense in what you say. If we talk no more about statesmanship (and to tell the truth, I am rather tired of the subject), our dialogue will end like the dialogues in a book, where, after much sham stage-fighting, the author's opinion is always made to prevail. By the way, I daresay you think that the nursery for Statesmen is Literature ; and that in these days of railways, a short line from Grub Street to Downing Street (a single set of rails, as no one will want to return) is imperatively needed.

*Milverton.* No, I do not. I think that good Literature, like any other good work, gives notice of material out of which a statesman might choose. To make a good book, my dear friend, is a very hard thing, I suspect. I do not mean a work of genius. Of course such are very rare. But to give an account of **any** transaction ; to put forward any connected views ; **in** short, to do any mere literary work well ; it **requires** many of the things which tend to make a good man of business—industry, for instance, method, clearness, resolve, power of adaptation.

*Ellesmere.* Yes, no doubt : foreign nations seem to have profited so much from calling literary men to their aid, that——

*Milverton.* That is an unjust sneer, Ellesmere. Some of the writings of the men to whom I know

you allude, do not fulfil the condition of being good books ; are full of false antitheses, illogical conclusions, vapid assertions, and words arranged according to prettiness, not to meaning. Such books are beacons ; they tell all men, The people who wrote us are sprightly fellows, but cannot be trusted ; they love sound more than sense, pray do not trust them with any function requiring sense rather than sound.

But you are not to conclude because some men make use of Literature, perhaps the only way open to them of carrying their views into action, that they could not act themselves. Napoleon was always writing early in life ; Cæsar indited books, even a grammar ; a whole host of captains and statesmen in the sixteenth century were writers. Follow Cervantes, Mendoza, Sidney, Camoens, Descartes, Paul Louis Courier, to the field, and come back with them—if you ever do come back alive, you individual clothed with horsehair and audacity ; and then follow them to their studies, and see whether they cannot give a good account of themselves in both departments.

*Ellesmere.* Pistol is come back again on earth, or Bombastes Furioso, neither of whose characters sits well upon you. But, my friend, we are wont in law to look to the point at issue ; we were talking of statesmen, not of soldiers.



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*Milverton.* Machiavelli——

*Ellesmere.* That worthy man !

*Milverton.* Cæsar again ! Lorenzo de' Medici, James the First of Scotland, Milton, Bacon, Grotius, Shaftesbury, Somers, St John, Temple, Burke. And were I to rack my brains, or my books, I could no doubt make an ample list.

*Ellesmere.* Good, bad, and indifferent : here they come, altogether.

*Milverton.* And have there been no bad statesmen amongst those who had no tincture of letters ?

*Ellesmere.* One or two, certainly.

*Milverton.* You know, Ellesmere, I have never talked loudly of the claims of literary men, and have always maintained that for them, especially when they are of real merit, to complain of neglect is for the most part absurd. A great writer, as I think **Mr** Carlyle has well said, creates a want for himself—a most artificial one. Nobody wanted him before he appeared. He has to show them what they want him for. You might as well talk of Leverrier's planet having been neglected in George the Second's time. It had not been discovered : that is all.

There may be misunderstandings as to the nature of literary merit, as indeed of all merit, which may prevent worldly men from making due use of it in

worldly affairs. For instance, I should say that diplomatic services are services peculiarly fit to be performed by literary men. They are likely to be more of cosmopolites than other men are. Their various accomplishments serve them as means of attaching others in strange countries. Their observations are likely to be good. One can easily see that a great deal of their habitual work would come into play in such employments. And there is an appearance of hardship in not giving, at least occasionally, to men who are particularly shut out from most worldly advantages, those offices which they promise to be most fitted for.

*Ellesmere.* It would improve many a literary man greatly to have, or to have had, some real business.

*Milverton.* No doubt. Indeed, I have always thought it is a melancholy thing to see how shut up, or rather I should say, how twisted and deformed a man becomes by surrendering himself to any one art, science, calling, or culture. You see a person become a lawyer, a physician, a clergyman, an author, or an artist; and cease to be a man, a wholesome man, fairly developed in all ways. Each man's art or function, however serviceable, should be attached to him no more than to a soldier his sword, which the accomplished military man can lay aside, and

not even remind you that he has ever worn such a thing.

*Ellesmere.* An idea strikes me ; I see how literary men may be rewarded, literature soundly encouraged, and yet the author be injured the least possible by his craft. Hitherto we have given pensions for what a man has written. I would do this : I would ascertain when a man has acquired that lamentable facility for doing second-rate things which is not uncommon in literature as in other branches of life, and then I would say to him, I see you can write, here is a hundred a year for you as long as you are quite quiet. Indeed, I think pensions and honours should generally be given to the persons who could have done the things for which such rewards are given, but who have not done them. I would say to this man, You have great parliamentary influence, you did not use it for mere party purposes ; there is a peerage for you. You, turning to another man, might have become a great lawyer, or rather a lawyer in great place : you had too much——

*Milverton.* Modesty——

*Ellesmere.* Pooh, nonsense ! modesty never did anybody any harm. No, let me go on with my speech. You had too much honesty, or scrupulousness, to escape being thrown out for the borough of

— which (as a lawyer to get on in the highest offices must please a constituency as well as understand his business) was fatal to you. Here, however, is a baronetcy for you.

Here, you, Mr Milverton, you might have written two books a year (dreadful thought!), you have not always inflicted one upon us. Be Guelphed, and consider yourself well off. Keep yourself quiet for several years, and we may advance you further.

Oh! what a patron of arts and letters is lost in me! Now this dog can bark and make a horrible noise to distinguish himself; he does not do it—that is why I like you so much, my dear Rollo (at that instant, unluckily, Rollo, taking heed of Ellesmere's comical gestures, and seeing that something was addressed to him, began to frisk about and bark). Oh, dear me! I see one can't praise or encourage any creature without doing mischief.

*Milverton.* You have not to reproach yourself for having done much in this way.

*Ellesmere.* Too much—sadly too much. But here comes John with a solicitous face, to get your orders about planting the trees which came last night, and which ought to have been put in early this morning. Attend to them: they are your great works; some of them may live to a remote posterity: and while you

are about it, my good fellow, do put in something which will produce eatables. Those fir-cones are very pretty things, but hard to eat. Remember that a certain learned gentleman who hopes to live to a good old age, is very fond of mulberries ; and if some trees were put in now, he might have something good to eat when he comes into the country, and be able to refresh himself after delivering judicious opinions on all subjects.

So we separated—I to my trees, and Ellesmere to take the dog out for a walk.

## CHAPTER VI.

I RESOLVED to-day to go out into the neighbouring pine-wood alone, to con over some notes which I am anxious to read by myself, with only an occasional remark from a wood-pigeon, or what may be gained from the gliding, rustling squirrel. There is scarcely anything in nature to be compared with a pine-wood, I think. I remember once when, after a long journey, I was approaching a city ennobled by great works of art, and of great renown, that I had to pass through what I was told by the guide-books was most insipid country, only to be hurried over as fast as might be, and nothing to be thought or said about it. But the guide-books, though very clever and useful things in their way, do not know each of us personally, nor what we secretly like and care for. Well, I was speeding through this "uninteresting" country, and now there remained but one long dull stage, as I read, to be gone through before I should reach the much-wished-for city. It was necessary to stay some time (for we travelled vetturino fashion) at



the little post-house, and I walked on, promising to be in the way whenever the vehicle should overtake me. The road led through a wood, chiefly of pines, varied, however, occasionally by other trees.

Into this wood I strayed. There was that almost indescribably soothing noise (the Romans would have used the word "susurrus"), the aggregate of many gentle movements of gentle creatures. The birds hopped but a few paces off, as I approached them; the brilliant butterflies wavered hither and thither before me; there was a soft breeze that day, and the tops of the tall trees swayed to and fro politely to each other. I found many delightful resting-places. It was not all dense wood; but here and there were glades (such open spots, I mean, as would be cut through by the sword for an army to pass); and here and there stood a clump of trees of different heights and foliage, as beautifully arranged as if some triumph of the art of landscape had been intended, though it was only Nature's way of healing up the gaps in the forest. For her healing is a new beauty.

It was very warm, without which nothing is beautiful to me; and I fell into the pleasantest train of thought. The easiness of that present moment seemed to show the possibility of all care being driven away from the world some day. For thus peace brings a

sensation of power with it. I shall not say what I thought of, for it is not good always to be communicative ; but altogether that hour in the pine-wood was the happiest hour of the whole journey, though I saw many grand pictures and noble statues, a mighty river and buildings which were built when people had their own clear thoughts of what they meant to do, and how they would do it. But in seeing these things there is, so to speak, something that is official, that must be done in a set way ; and, after all, it is the chance felicities in minor things which are so pleasant in a journey. You had intended, for instance, to go and hear some great service, and there was something to be done, and a crowd to be encountered ; and you open your window and find, as the warm air streams in, that beautiful sounds come with it ; in truth, your window is not far off from an opening in one of the cathedral windows, and there you stay drinking in all the music, being alone. You feel that a bit of good fortune has happened to you ; and you are happier all the day for it.

It is the same thing in the journey of life : pleasure falls into no plan.

I think I have justified my liking for a pine-wood ; and though the particular wood I can get at here is

but a poor thing as compared with the great forests I have been thinking of, yet, looked at with all the reminiscence of their beauties, its few and mean particulars are so wrought upon by memory and fancy, that it brings before me a sufficient picture, half seen, half recollected, of all that is most beautiful in sylvan scenery.

To my wood then I wandered: and, after pacing up and down a little, and enjoying the rich colour of the trunks of the trees, I sat down upon a tree that had been lately felled, and read out my notes to myself. Here they are. They begin, I see, with a little narration; which, however, is not a bad beginning.

It was a bright winter's day; and I sat upon a garden-seat in a sheltered nook towards the south, having come out of my study to enjoy the warmth, like a fly that has left some snug crevice to stretch his legs upon the unwontedly sunny pane in December. My little daughter (she is a very little thing about four years old) came running up to me, and when she had arrived at my knees, held up a straggling but pretty weed. Then, with great earnestness, and as if fresh from some controversy on the subject, she exclaimed, "Is this a weed, Papa; is this a weed?"

"Yes, a weed," I replied.

With a look of disappointment she moved off to the one she loved best amongst us ; and, asking the same question, received the same answer.

“ But it has flowers,” the child replied.

“ That does not signify ; it is a weed,” was the inexorable answer.

Presently, after a moment’s consideration, the child ran off again, and meeting the gardener just near my nook, though out of sight from where I sat, she coaxingly addressed him.

“ Nicholas dear, is this a weed ? ”

“ Yes, miss ; they call it ‘ Shepherd’s purse.’ ”

A pause ensued : I thought the child was now fairly silenced by authority, when all at once the little voice began again, “ Will you plant it in my garden, Nicholas dear ? do plant it in my garden.”

There was no resisting the anxious entreaty of the child ; and man and child moved off together to plant the weed in one of those plots of ground which the children walk about upon a good deal, and put branches of trees in and grown-up flowers, and then examine the roots (a system as encouraging as other systems of education I could name), and which they call their gardens.

But the child’s words, “ Will you plant it in my

garden?" remained upon my mind. That is what I have always been thinking, I exclaimed: and it is what I will begin by saying.

And, indeed, dear reader, if I were to tell you how long I have been thinking of the subject which I mean to preface by the child's fond words; and how hopeless it has at times appeared to me to say anything worth hearing about it; and how I have still clung to my resolve, and worked on at other things with a view of coming eventually to this, you would sympathise with me already, as we do with any man who keeps a task long in mind and heart, though he execute it at last but poorly, and though it be but a poor task, such as a fortune for himself, or a tomb for his remains. For we like to see a man persevere in anything.

Without more preface, then, I will say at once that this subject is one which I have been wont to call "the great sin of great cities"—not that in so calling it, I have perhaps been strictly just, but the description will do well enough. For what is the thing which must so often diminish the pride of man when contemplating the splendid monuments of a great city, its shops, its public buildings, parks, equipages, and above all, the wonderful way in which vast crowds of people go about their affairs with so

little outward contest and confusion? I imagine the beholder in the best parts of the town, not diving into narrow streets, wandering sickened and exhausted near uncovered ditches in squalid suburbs, or studiously looking behind the brilliant surface of things. But what is it which on that very surface, helping to form a part of the brilliancy (like the prismatic colours seen on stagnant film), conveys at times to any thoughtful mind an impression of the deepest mournfulness, a perception of the dark blots upon human civilisation,—in a word, some appreciation of the great sin of great cities? The vile sewer, the offensive factory chimney, the squalid suburb, tell their own tale very clearly. The girl with hardened look, and false imprinted smile, tells one no less ominous of evil.

In fact I do not know any one thing which concentrates and reflects more accurately the evils of any society than this sin. It is a measure of the want of employment, the uncertainty of employment, the moral corruption amongst the higher classes, the want of education amongst the lower, the relaxation of bonds between master and servant, employer and employed; and, indeed, it expresses the want of prudence, truth, light, and love in that community.

In considering any evil, our thoughts may be classed under three heads—the nature of it, the causes of it, the remedies for it. Often the discussion of any one of these great branches of the subject involves the other two; and it becomes difficult to divide them without pedantry. But in general, we may, for convenience, attend to such a division of the subject.

## I. THE NATURE.

The nature of the evil in this case is one which does not require to be largely dwelt upon; and yet several things must be said about it. One which occurs to me is the degradation of race. Thousands upon thousands of beautiful women are by it condemned to sterility. As a nation, we should look with exceeding jealousy and alarm at any occupation which claimed our tallest men and left them without offspring. And, surely, it is no light matter, in a national point of view, that any sin should claim the right of consuming, sometimes as rapidly as if they were a slave population, a considerable number of the best-looking persons in the community.

How slight, however, is the physical degradation compared with the mental degradation caused by this

sin : and here I do not mean only the dishonour of the individuals, but the large social injury which the mere existence of such a thing causes. For it accustoms men to the contemplation of the greatest social failures, and introduces habitually a low view of the highest things. We are apt to look at each individual case too harshly ; but the whole thing is not looked at gravely enough. This often happens in considering any great social abuse ; and so we frequently commence the remedy by some great injustice in a particular case.

In appreciating the nature of this evil, the feelings of the people concerned with it are a large part of the subject. On the one side are shame, pride, dejection, restlessness, hopelessness, and a sense of ill-usage, resulting in a bitter effrontery, a mean heartlessness, and a godless remorse. As a mere matter of statesmanship such a class requires to be looked to as pre-eminently dangerous. On the other side is often the meanness without the shame ; and a permanent coarseness and unholiness of mind is inflicted upon the sex that most requires refinement and spirituality in the affections.

To return, however, to a consideration of the feelings of the poor women ; it may be noticed that they have an excessive fear of being left alone with their



own recollections, which is no doubt a great obstacle to their being reclaimed. Withal there is something very grand, though sad, that one of the main obstacles to outward improvement lies in the intensity of shame for the wrong-doing, in a dumb but profound remorse. You may see similar feelings operating very variously among the greatest men whose spiritual state is at all known to us. Poor Luther exclaims, "When I am assailed with heavy tribulations, I rush out among my pigs, rather than remain alone by myself. The human heart is like a millstone in a mill: when you put wheat under it, it turns and grinds and bruises the wheat to flour; if you put no wheat, it still grinds on, but then it is itself it grinds and wears away."

Certainly the Gospel seems especially given to meet these cases of remorse, and to prevent despair (not the tempter but the slave-driver to so many crimes) from having an unjust and irreligious hold, not so much on men's fears as on their fancies—especially their notions of perfection as regards themselves. For I doubt not but that men and women much lower down in the scale of cultivation and sensibility than we imagine, are haunted by a sense of their own fall from what they feel and think they ought to have been.

## II. THE CAUSES.

The main cause of this sin on the woman's part is want—absolute want. This, though one of the most grievous things to contemplate, has at the same time a large admixture of hope in it. For, surely, if civilisation is to make any sufficient answer for itself and for the many serious evils it promotes, it ought to be that it renders the vicissitudes of life less extreme, that it provides a resource for all of us against excessive want. Hitherto we have not succeeded in making it do so, but it is contended, and with apparent justice, that it acts better in this respect than savage life. At any rate, to return to the main course of my argument, it is more satisfactory to hear that this evil is a result, on one side at least, of want rather than of depravity.

The next great cause is in the over-rigid views and opinions, especially as against women, expressed in reference to unchastity. Christianity has been in some measure to blame for this; though, if rightly applied, it would have been the surest cure. “Publicans and sinners!” Such did He prefer before the company of Pharisees and hypocrites. These latter, however, have been in great credit ever since; and, for my part, I see no end to their being pronounced for ever the choice society of the world.

The virtuous, carefully tended and carefully brought up, ought to bethink themselves how little they may owe to their own merit that they are virtuous, for it is in the evil concurrence of bad disposition and masterless opportunity that crime comes. Of course, to an evil-disposed mind, opportunity will never be wanting ; but when one person or class of persons is from circumstances peculiarly exposed to temptation, and goes wrong, it is no great stretch of charity for others to conclude that that person, or class, did not begin with worse dispositions than they themselves who are still without a stain. This is very obvious ; but it is to be observed that the reasoning powers which are very prompt in mastering any simple scientific proposition, experience a wonderful halting in their logic when applied to the furtherance of charity.

There is a very homely proverb about the fate of the pitcher that goes often to the water, which might be an aid to charity, and which bears closely on the present case. The Spaniards, from whom I dare say we have the proverb, express it prettily and pithily :—

“Cantarillo que muchas vezes va a la fuente,  
O dexa la asa, o la frente.”

“The little pitcher that goes often to the fountain, either leaves the handle or the spout behind some day.”

The dainty vase which is kept under a glass case in a drawing-room should not be too proud of remaining without a flaw, considering its great advantages.

In the New Testament we have such matters treated in a truly Divine manner. There is no palliation of crime. Sometimes our charity is so mixed up with a mash of sentiment and sickly feeling that we do not know where we are, and what is vice, and what is virtue. But here are the brief stern words, "Go, and sin no more;" but, at the same time, there is an infinite consideration for the criminal, not however as criminal, but as human being: I mean, not in respect of her criminality, but of her humanity.

Now, an instance of our want of obedience to these Christian precepts has often struck me in the not visiting married women whose previous lives will not bear inspection. Whose will? Not merely all Christian people, but all civilised people, ought to set their faces against this excessive retrospection.

But if ever there were an occasion on which men (I say men, but I mean more especially women) should be careful of scattering abroad unjust and severe sayings, it is in speaking of the frailties and delinquencies of women. For it is one of those things where an unjust judgment, or the fear of one, breaks down the bridge behind the repentant; and has often

made an error into a crime, and a single crime into a life of crime.

A daughter has left her home, madly, ever so wickedly, if you like ; but what are too often the demons tempting her onwards and preventing her return ? The uncharitable speeches she has heard at home ; and the feelings he shares with most of us, that those we have lived with are the sharpest judges of our conduct.

“ Would you, then,” exclaims some reader or hearer, “ take back and receive with tenderness a daughter who had erred ? ” “ Yes,” I reply, “ if she had been the most abandoned woman upon earth.”

A foolish family pride often adds to this uncharitable way of feeling and speaking which I venture to reprehend. Our care is not that an evil and an unfortunate thing has happened, but that our family has been disgraced, as we call it. Family vanity mixes up with and exasperates rigid virtue. Good heavens ! if we could but see where disgrace really lies, how often men would be ashamed of their riches and their honours ; and would discern that a bad temper, or an irritable disposition, was the greatest family disgrace that attached to them.

A fear of the uncharitable speeches of others is the incentive in many courses of evil ; but it has a pecu-

liar effect in the one we are considering, as it occurs with most force just at the most critical period—when the victim of seduction is upon the point of falling into worse ways. Then it is that the uncharitable speeches she has heard on this subject in former days are so many goads to her, urging her along the downward path of evil. What a strange desperate notion it is of men, when they have erred, that things are at the worst, that nothing can be done to rescue them; whereas Judas might have done something better than hang himself.

But if we were all so kind, exclaims some rigid man, we should only encourage the evil we wish to subdue. He does not see that the first step in evil, and the abandonment to it as a course of life, proceed mostly from totally different motives, and are totally different things. One who dwelt on a secure height of peace and virtue, has fallen sadly and come down upon a table-land plagued with storms and liable to attacks of all kinds, and from which there is no ascent to the height again, but which is still at an immense distance above a certain abyss; and we should be very cautious of doing anything that might make the foolish, dejected, pride-led person plunge hopelessly down into the abyss, in all probability to be lost for ever.

Before quitting the subject of the family, I must observe that, independently of any harshness of remark which a young person may have been accustomed to hear on matters connected with our present subject, the ill-management of parents must be taken into account as one of the most common causes of this sin. It is very sad to be obliged to say this, but the thing is true, and must be said. We must not, however, be too much discouraged at this, for the truth is, that to perform well any one of the great relations of life is an immense difficulty ; and when we see on a tombstone (those underneath can now say nothing to the contrary) that the defunct was a good husband, father, and son, we may conclude, if the words were truthful, that we are passing by the mortal remains of an Admirable Crichton in morality. And these relations are the more difficult, as they are not to be completely fulfilled by an abnegation of self—in other words, by a weak giving way upon all points ; which is the ruin of many a person. I am not, however, going, in this particular case, to speak of the spoiling of children in the ordinary sense, but rather of the contrary defect ; which, strange to say, is quite as common, if not more so. Of necessity the ages of parents and children are separated by a considerable interval ; the particular relation is one full of awe and

authority; and the effect of that disparity of years, and of that natural awe and authority, may easily, by harsh or ungenial parents, be strained too far; other persons, and the world in general (not caring for the welfare of those who are no children of theirs, and besides using the just courtesy towards strangers), are often tolerant when parents are not so, which puts them to a great disadvantage; small matters are often needlessly made subjects of daily comment and blame; and, in the end, it comes that home is sometimes anything but the happy place we choose to make it out in songs and fictions of various kinds. This, when it occurs, is a great pity. I am for making home very happy to children if it can be managed; which, of course, is not to be done by weak compliances, and having no fixed rules. For no creature is happy, or even free, as Goethe has pointed out, except in the circuit of law. But laws and regulations having once been laid down, all within those bounds should be very kind at home. Now listen to the captious querulous scoldings that you may hear, even as you go along the streets, addressed by parents to children; is it not manifest that in after-life there will be too much fear in the children's minds, and a belief that their father and mother never will sympathise with them as others even might—never will forgive them? People of all



classes, high and low, err in the same way; and, in looking about the world, I have sometimes thought that a thoroughly judicious father is one of the rarest creatures to be met with.

Another cause of the frailty of women in the lower classes is in the comparative inelegance and uncleanness of the men in their own class. It also arises from the fondness which all women have for merit, or what they suppose to be such, so that their love is apt to follow what is in any way distinguished: and this throws the women of any class cruelly open to the seductions of the men in the class above. For women are the real aristocrats; and it is one of their greatest merits. Men's intellects, even some of the brightest, may occasionally be deceived by theories about equality and the like; but women, who look at reality more, are rarely led away by nonsense of this kind.

A cause of this sin of a very different kind, and applying to men, is a dreadful notion which has occasionally been adopted in these latter ages, namely, that it is a fine thing for a man to have gone through a great deal of vice—to have had much personal experience of wickedness; in short, that knowledge of vice is knowledge of the world, and that such knowledge of the world is eminently

useful. That is not the way in which the greatest thinkers read the world ; they tell us that

“ The Gods approve the depth and not the tumult of the soul.”

Self-restraint is the grand thing, is the great tutor.

But let us not talk insincerely even for a good end, as we may suppose ; and therefore do not let us deny that every evil carries with it its teachings. An indulgence in dissipation teaches that dissipation is a fatal thing : and the man who learns that, very often does not learn anything more. But the excellence of particular men must greatly consist in their appreciating truths without having to pay the full experience for them ; so that in those respects they have a great start of other men. However, whether these theories of mine be true or not, there can be no doubt, I think, that indulgence of any kind is a thing which requires no theory to support it ; and I do not think it will be found that the men of consummate knowledge of the world have gained that knowledge by vice ; but rather, as all other knowledge is gained, by toil and truth and love and self-restraint. And these four things do not abide with vice.

Probably, too, a low view of humanity which vice gives, is in itself the greatest barrier to the highest knowledge.

One great source of the sin we are considering is the want of other thoughts. Here Puritanism comes in, as it has any time these two hundred years, to darken and deepen every mischief. The lower orders here are left with so little to think of but labour and vice. Now, any grand thought, great poetry, or noble song, is adverse to any abuse of the passions—even that which seems most concerned with the passions. For all that is great in idea, that insists upon men's attention, does so by an appeal, expressed or implied, to the infinite within him and around him. A man coming from a great representation of Macbeth is not in the humour for a low intrigue: and, in general, vice, especially of the kind we are considering, seizes hold not of the passionate so much as of the cold and vacant mind.

On this account education and cultivation are to be looked to as potent remedies. The pleasures of the poor will be found to be moral safeguards rather than dangers. I smile sometimes when I think of the preacher in some remote country place imploring his hearers not to give way to backbiting, not to indulge in low sensuality, and not to busy themselves with other people's affairs. Meanwhile, what are they to do if they do not concern themselves with such things? The heavy ploughboy who lounges along in

that listless manner has a mind which moves with a rapidity that bears no relation to that outward heaviness of his. That mind will be fed ; will consume all about it, like oxygen, if new thoughts and aspirations are not given it. The true strategy in attacking any vice, is by putting in a virtue to counteract it ; in attacking any evil thought, by putting in a good thought to meet it. Thus a man is lifted into a higher state of being, and his old slough falls off him.

With women, too, there is this especial danger, that fiction has hitherto been apt to tell them that they are nothing if they are not loved, and to fill their heads with the most untrue views of human life. Fiction must try and learn that she is only Truth with a mask on, so that she may speak truer things sometimes with less offence than Truth herself. Fiction must not represent love as always such a very fine thing, or as tending invariably to felicity, thus ignoring the trials of wedded life, and of affection generally—as if life were cut into two parts, one all shade, the other all light. We cannot school Love much ; but sometimes he might be induced to listen to reason. And at any rate, all would agree that much mischief may be done by unsound representations of human life in this very important respect.

But, our antagonist may say, these very fictions are amusement, and so far of use as furnishing some food for the mind. Yes: and I am not prepared to say that bad fictions, or almost anything, may not be better than nothing for the mind. But when continuous cultivation is joined to education (which should be *the* object for statesmen and governing people of all kinds), people will not be supposed to be educated at the time of their nonage, and then left sight of and hold of for evermore, as far as regards their betters. But it will be seen that we are all so far children, or at least like children in some respects, throughout our lives, that the means of cultivation should be successively offered to us.

It is difficult to see the drift of the foregoing words without an example. But what I mean is this—do not let us merely teach our poor young people to read and write and hear about all manner of arts, sciences, and productions, and then dropping these young people at the most dangerous age, provide no amusements, enable them to carry on no pursuits, throw open no refinements of life to them, show them no parks, no gardens, and leave them to the pothouse and their sordid homes.

Of course they will go wrong if we do.

## III. THE REMEDIES.

As poverty came first among the causes, so to remove it must come first among the remedies. For this purpose let it be carefully observed what class of persons furnishes most victims to this sin. Try and mend the evils of that class.

There will be two kinds of poverty, the one arising from general inadequacy of pay for employment that is pretty constant ; the other from uncertainty of employment at particular periods. Each requires to be dealt with differently. Frequently, though, they are found combined.

To meet the first of these evils, more work must be found in the country, or some hands must be removed out of it.

If emigration is to be adopted, it should be done in a different manner from any that has yet been attempted.

But it seems as if something better than, or besides, emigration might be attempted.

It may seem romantic, but I cannot help hoping that considerable investigation into prices may lead people to ascertain better what are fair wages, and that purchasers will not run madly after cheapness. There are everywhere just men who endeavour to

prevent the price of labourers' wages from falling below what they (the just men) think right. I have no doubt that this has an effect upon the whole labour-market, Christianity coming in to correct political economy. And so in other matters, I can conceive that private persons may generally become more anxious to put aside the evils of competition, and to give, as well as get, what is fair.

But many things might be done to enable the wages of the poor to go further : and surely the glory of a state, and of the principal people in it, should be that men make the most of their labour in that state.

Improvement of dwellings is one means.\*

Improvements in the representation and transfer of property are other great means to this end.

It may seem that I have wandered far from the subject (the great sin of great cities) to questions of

\* Many a workwoman earns but 7s. a week. She has to pay 3s. or 3s. 6d. for one miserable apartment. Take her food at 3s. or 2s. 6d., and there will remain 1s. a week to provide for clothing, sickness, charity, pleasure, and miscellaneous expenditure of all kinds. It is easy to see that any sudden mishap, such as sickness, must wreck such a person's means ; and also that where lies the chief room for making these means go further, is in the expenditure for lodgings, which now consumes about half her earnings.

currency and transfer of property. But I am persuaded that there is the closest connection between subjects of this kind. The investment of savings is surely a question of the highest importance. But it is not that only which I mean. All manner of facilities should be given to the poor to become owners of property; and wherever it could be managed, almost in spite of themselves, they should be made so: that is, by putting by portions of their wages when it is manifestly possible for this to be done, as in the case of domestic servants, or where the employed are living with, or in some measure under the guidance of, their employers.

Much is being attempted by various benevolent persons in ways of this kind; and the greatest attention should be paid to these experiments.

There are various things which the state could do in these matters; but it would require a very wise and great government: and how is such a thing to be got? In the act of rising to power, men fail to obtain the knowledge and thought, and especially the purpose, to use power. There is some Eastern proverb, I think, about the meanest reptiles being found at the top of the highest towers. That, as applied to government, is ill-natured and utterly untrue. But people



who are swarming up a difficult ascent, or maintaining themselves with difficulty on a narrow ledge at a great height, are not employed exactly in the way to become great philosophers and reformers of mankind. Constitutional governments may be great blessings, but nobody can doubt that they have their price. There are, however, excellent men in high places amongst us at the present moment ; but timidity in attempting good is their portion, espécially by any way that has not become thoroughly invincible in argument. I suppose that any man who should try some very generous thing as a statesman, and should fail, would be irretrievably lost as a statesman.

Meanwhile socialism is put forward to fill the void of government : and if government does not make exertion, we may yet have dire things to encounter. By government in the foregoing sentence I mean not only what we are in the habit of calling such, but all the governing and directing persons in a nation. Some of them are certainly making great efforts even now, and there lies our hope.

But, supposing that the supply of workmen and workwomen could be better adapted to the demand ; and that means could be found to provide in some measure for neutralising the ill effects of the un-

certainty of employment (which two things, though very difficult, are still not beyond the range of human endeavour and accomplishment), there would yet remain many, very many, individual cases of utter and sudden distress and destitution amongst young women, which form the chief causes of their fall. Now, how are these to be averted?

There should be some better means of intercommunication between rich and poor than there is at present. It seems as if the priests of all religions might perform that function, and that it should be considered one of their most important functions. It should be done, if possible, by some persons who come amongst the poor for other purposes than to relieve their poverty. At the same time, there might be an administrative officer of high place and power in the government who should be on the alert to suggest and promote good offices of the kind I have just alluded to. In reality the Minister of Education (if we had one) would be the real minister for destitution, as doing most to prevent it; and various minor duties of a humane kind might devolve upon him.

Any one acquainted with the annals of the poor will tell how familiar such words are to him as the following, and how true on inquiry he has found

them,—“Father fell ill of the fever” (*the* fever the poor girl may well say, for it is *the* fever which want of air and water, and working in stifling rooms, have brought upon many thousands of our workmen); “mother and I did pretty well in the straw-bonnet line while she lived; but she died come April two years: and I’ve been ’most starved since then, and took to those ways.”

“You were fifteen when your mother died, you say, and you have no relations in this town?”

“There is my little brother, and he is in the work-house, and they let me go and see him on Mondays; and there is my aunt, but she is a very poor woman and lives a long, long way off, and has a many children of her own.”

“You can read and write?”

“I can read a little.”

Now, of course, there are thousands of cases of this kind, in which one feels that the poor child has slipped out of the notice and care of people who would have been but too glad to aid her. I daresay neither mother nor child ever went to any church or chapel. And, in truth, let us be honest and confess that going to church in England is somewhat of an operation, especially to a poor, ill-clad person.

This system of pews and places, the want of openness of churches, the length of the service resulting from the admixture of services, the air of over-cleanliness and respectability which besets the place, and the difficulty of getting out when you like, are sad hindrances to the poor, the ill-dressed, the sick, the timid, the fastidious, the wicked, and the cultivated.

And then, there is nobody into whose ear the poor girl can pour her troubles, *except she comes as a beggar*. This will be said to be a leaning on my part to the confessional. I cannot help that; I must speak the truth that is in me. And I wish that many amongst us Protestants, who would, I doubt not, welcome the duty, could, without pledging ourselves to all manner of doctrines, but merely by a genial use of those common relations of life which bring us in daily contact with the poor, fulfil much of what is genuinely good in the functions of a confessor, and thus become brothers of mercy and brothers of charity to the poor.

Meanwhile it is past melancholy, and verges on despair, to reflect upon what is going on amongst ministers of religion, who are often but too intent upon the fopperies of religion to have heart and time for the substantial work entrusted to them—immersed in heart-breaking trash from which no sect is free; for here are fopperies of discipline, there

fopperies of doctrine (still more dangerous as it seems to me). And yet there are these words resounding in their ears, "Pure religion and undefiled is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world." And the word "world," as Coleridge has well explained, is *this* order of things, the order of things you are in. Clerical niceness and over-sanctity, for instance, and making more and longer sermons than there is any occasion for, and insisting upon needless points of doctrine, and making Christianity a stumbling-block to many, that, excellent clergyman (for there are numbers who deserve the name), that is your world, there lies your temptation to err.

It has occurred to me that schoolmasters and schoolmistresses would form good means of communication with the poor: and so much the better from their agency being indirect as regards worldly affairs;\* I mean that their first business is not to care for the physical well-being of their pupils. In

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\* In this respect the opportunities of medical men are very great; and surely the medical profession best emancipates itself from any tendency to materialism, and dignifies itself by entering upon the duties and the privileges of a teacher and consoler, when it performs, as it very often does, some of those offices of charity which ever lie just under its hands.

after-life, they would be likely to know something of the ways and modes of life of their former pupils, and would be most valuable auxiliaries to landlords, master-manufacturers, to masters in general, and to all who are anxious to improve the condition of those under them.

While talking of the schoolmaster, we must not omit to consider the immense importance, in its bearing on our subject, of a better education for women—especially for women of what are called the middling classes—an education which should develop in them the qualities and powers which they are most deficient in, such as stern reasoning; which is at the foundation of justice, and which should free them from that absurd timidity of *mind* more than of body which prevents their seeing things as they are, and makes them, and consequently men, the victims of conventionality.

This thing, conventionality, is a great enemy to those who would war against the sin we are considering. Hypocrisy is said to be the homage which vice pays to virtue; conventionality is the adoration which both vice and virtue offer up to worldliness. See its effects in this particular case. The discussion of our subject is almost beyond the pale of conven-

tionality. Years ago, an old college friend defined this present writer as a man who could say the most audacious things with the least offence. I hope my friend was right, for, indeed, in discussing this subject I need all that power now. Conventionality stiffens up the whole figure, and sets the eyes in the fixed direction it pleases, so that men and women can pass through the streets ignoring the greatest horrors which surround them. And consider what a dangerous thing it is, when it is once presumed that there is any class with whom we can have no sympathy; that there are any beings of a different kind from the rest of us. It is not for us, collections of dust, to feel contempt. In a future life we may have such a survey as may justify contempt, but then we should have too much love to feel it. But, indeed, in most cases, it is not contempt, but conventionality, that induces us to pass by and ignore what it is not consistent with good taste to know anything about.

But there is another fertile mode in which conventionality works in increasing the great sin of great cities. And that is by rendering all manner of imaginary wants real wants, and thus helping to enslave men and women. False shame has often, I doubt not, led to the worst consequences—the shame, for instance, arising from not having the clothes of a kind

imagined to be fit for a particular station ; and so, people submit to a vice to satisfy a foible.

A class of persons who are found to furnish great numbers of the victims to the sin we are considering is that of domestic servants. This leads to a suspicion that there are peculiar temptations, weaknesses, errors, and mismanagement incident to that class. Their education, to begin with, is wretchedly defective. But besides that, they are particularly liable to the slavery of conventionality : indeed, there are few people more subdued by weak notions of what it is correct for them to have, and to be, and to do : which often ends in anything but a correspondence of the reality of their condition with their ideal. It must be remembered, too, that they undergo, in an especial degree, the temptation of being brought near to a class superior to theirs in breeding and niceness ; and, consequently, that they are very liable to be discontented with their own.

But great improvement might be made in the management of servants. Their efforts to save money should be directed and aided. New means might be invented for that purpose. It might be much more generally arranged than it is, both in households and in other establishments, that a fund should



be formed out of which those female servants who remained a certain time should have a sum of money, in fact what in official life is called "retired allowances."

Then, of course, masters and mistresses should recognise the fact, instead of needlessly discouraging it, that men and women love one another in all ranks—that Mary, if a pleasant or comely girl, is pretty nearly sure at some time or other to have a lover. Let the master and mistress be aware of that fact, and treat it as an open question which may be discussed sometimes with advantage to all parties.

Instead of such conduct, one hears sometimes that such maxims are laid down as that "no followers are allowed." What does a lady mean who lays down such a law in her household? Perhaps she subscribes to some abolition society; which is a good thing in as far as it cultivates her kindly feelings towards an injured race. But does she know that, by this law of hers, as applied to her own household, she is imitating, in a humble way, one of the worst things connected with slavery?

As this prohibition extends to near relations as well as to lovers, if obeyed it renders the position of a servant-girl still more perilous as more isolated; and, if disobeyed, it is a fertile source of the habit of con-

cealment, one of the worst to which all persons in a subordinate situation are prone.

For my own part, I could not bear to live with servants who were to see none of their friends and relations : I should feel I was keeping a prison, and not ruling a household.

Amongst the principal remedies must be reckoned, or at least hoped for, an improvement in men as regards this sin. To hope for such an improvement will be looked upon as chimerical by some persons, and the notion of introducing great moral remedies for the evil in question as wholly romantic. It seems impossible : every new and great thing does, till it is done ; and then the only wonder is, that it was not done long ago.

Oh that there were more love in the world, and then these things that we deplore could not be. One would think that the man who had once loved any woman, would have some tenderness for all. And love implies an infinite respect. All that was said or done by Chivalry of old, or sung by Troubadours, but shadows forth the feeling which is in the heart of any one who loves. Love, like the opening of the heavens to the Saints, shows for a moment, even to the dullest man, the possibilities of the human race. He has

faith, hope, and charity for another being, perhaps but a creation of his imagination : still it is a great advance for a man to be profoundly loving even in his imaginations. What Shelley makes Apollo exclaim, Love might well say too :—

“ I am the eye with which the Universe  
Beholds itself and knows itself divine ;  
All harmony of instrument or verse,  
All prophecy, all medicine are mine,  
All light of art or nature ;—to my song  
Victory and praise in their own right belong.”

Indeed, love is a thing so deep and so beautiful, that each man feels that nothing but conceits and pretty words have been said about it by other men.

And then to come down from this, and to dishonour the image of the thing so loved. No man could do so while the memory of love was in his mind. And indeed, even without these recollections, we might hope that, on the contemplation of so much ruin, and the consideration of the exquisite beauty of the thing spoiled, there would sometimes come upon the heart of a man a pity so deep as to protect him from this sin as much as aversion itself could do. And we may imagine that even men of outrageous dissipation, but who have still left some greatness and fineness of mind (like Mirabeau, for example), will have a horror of the sin we are condemning, though very sinful

in other respects. And certainly the disgrace to humanity that there is in indiscriminate prostitution is appalling: and, like constrained marriage for money, it has something more repulsive about it than is to be met with in things that may be essentially more wicked.

I hope I am not uncharitable in saying this; but anybody who thinks so must remember that what is alluded to by me is the worst form of the sin in question; as, in fact, it disgraces the streets of our principal cities—in utter lovelessness and mercenary recklessness.

I said above, the “exquisite beauty of the thing spoiled.” And, in truth, how beautiful a thing is youth—beautiful in an animal. In contemplating it, the world seems young again for us. Each young thing seems born to new hopes. Parents feel this for their children, hoping that something will happen to them quite different from what happened to themselves. They would hardly take all the pains they do with these young creatures, if they could believe that the young people were only to grow up into middle-aged men and women with the usual cares and troubles descending upon them like a securely entailed inheritance. There is something fanciful in

all this, and in reality a grown-up person is a much *more valuable and worthy creature than most young ones* ; but still anything that blights the young must ever be most repugnant to humanity.

I had now read over all that I had put down in writing ; and, as I laid aside the manuscript, I felt how sadly it fell short of what I had thought to say on this subject. I suppose, however, that even when they are good, a man's words seem poor to himself, for the workman is too familiar with the wrong side of all his workmanship. Moreover, much must always lie in the ear of the hearer. We say enough to set alight the hidden trains of thought which abide in the recesses of men's hearts, unknown to them ; and they are startled into thinking for themselves. After all, it is not often so requisite for a writer to make things logically clear to men, as to put them into the mood he wishes to have them in. I suppose the snake-charmer and the horse-whisperer have some such scheme.

But, said I, as I threw some stones into a pool which was near me in a partial clearing of the wood, I would go on with this work if I knew that all my efforts would make no more stir than these pebbles in that pool. And then I proceeded to think of the

topics which are yet before me, full of doubt and difficulty. I should like to have some talk with Ellesmere, I exclaimed; I fear he will have no sympathy with me, and an utter disbelief in anybody doing any good in this matter. But he is a shrewd man of the world, and he speaks out fearlessly. It would be well to hear his remarks beforehand, while they may yet be of use to me. I certainly will consult him.

I stepped out of the wood into the beaten road, a change which I always feel to be like that which occurs in the mind of a man who, having been wrapt in some romance of his own, suddenly disengages himself from it and talks with his fellows upon the ordinary topics of the day, affecting a shrewd care about the price of corn and the state of our foreign relations.

By the time I reached Worth-Ashton I had left all forest thoughts well behind me, and was quite at home on the broad beaten road of commonplace affairs.

## CHAPTER VII.

I HAVE read the foregoing notes to Ellesmere, whom I asked to come here the first lawyer's holiday that he could make. During the reading, which was in my study, he said nothing, but seemed, as I thought, unusually grave and attentive. When it was finished, he proposed that we should walk out upon the downs. Still he made no remark, but strolled on moodily, until I said to him, "I am afraid, Ellesmere, you have some heavy brief which sits upon your mind just now; or, perhaps, I have somewhat wearied you in reading so much to you upon a subject about which you probably do not care much." "I care more than you do," he replied—"forgive my abruptness, Milverton, but what I say is true. To show you why I do care would be to tell you a long story, and to betray to you that which I had never intended to tell mortal man.

"But, if you care to hear it, I will tell you; it bears closely upon some of your views, and may modify them in some way. I can talk to you on

such a theme better than to almost any man, for it is like talking to a philosophic system ; and yet there is still some humanity left in you, so that one may hope for a little sympathy now and then without having too much, or being afflicted with pity and wonder and foolish exclamations of any kind." I did not interrupt him to defend myself, being too anxious to hear what he had to say. Besides I saw this attack upon me was partly an excuse to himself for telling me something which he hardly meant to tell. He threw himself down upon the turf, and, after a few minutes' silence, thus began :—

Well, I was once upon my travels staying for a few days in a German town, not a very obscure or a very renowned one ; but indeed the whereabouts is a very unimportant matter, and I do not particularise any of the minute circumstances of my story, because I do not wish hereafter to be reminded of them. I remember it was on a Sunday, and the day was fine. I remember, too, I went to church, to a Protestant church, where I did not understand much of what I heard, but liked what I did. They sang psalms, such as I fancy Luther would have approved of ; and I thought it would be a serious thing for a hostile army to meet a body of men who had been thus singing.



Grand music, such as you, for instance, would like better, is a good thing too. Our cathedrals might have combined both. I do not know why I tell you all this, for it does not immediately concern my story, but I suppose it is because I do not like to approach it too quickly, and I must linger on the details of a day which is so deeply imprinted upon my memory. I remember well the sermon, or rather the bits of it which I understood, and out of which I made my sermon for myself. That pathetic word *verloren* (lost) occurred many times. Then there was a great deal about the cares of this life occupying so much time, and then about the pleasures, or the thoughts of misspent youth being impressed upon manhood, to the perennial detriment of the character. I made out, or fancied I did, that it was a sermon showing how short a time was given to spiritual life. I dare say it was a very commonplace sermon that I made of it ; but somehow, the sermons we preach to ourselves, in which, by the way, we can be sure of taking the most apt illustrations from the store of our own follies, are always interesting. And when the good preacher, a most benign and apostolic-looking man, pronounced the benediction, I felt as if I had been hearing some friendly searching words which might well be laid to heart. After the sermon was over,

I strolled about. The day moved on, and towards evening time, I went with the stream of the townspeople, gentle and simple, to some public gardens which lay outside the town and were joined to it by beautiful walks. People speak of the sadness of being in a crowd and knowing no one. There is something pleasurable in it too. I wandered amongst the various groups of quiet, decorous, beer-imbibing Germans, who, in family-parties, had come out to these gardens to drink their beer, smoke their pipes, and hear some music. In those unfortunate regions they have not made a ghastly idol of the Sunday.

At last I sat down at a table where a young girl and a middle-aged woman, who carried a baby, were refreshing themselves with some very thin potation. They looked poor decent people. I soon entered into conversation with them, and therefore did not leave it long a matter of doubt that I was an Englishman. I perceived that something was wrong with my friends, although I could not comprehend what it was. I could see that the girl could hardly restrain herself from bursting into tears; and there was something quite comical in the delight she expressed at some feats on the tight-rope, which she would insist upon my looking at, and her then, in a minute afterwards, returning to her quiet distress and anxious deplorable

countenance. A proud English girl would have kept all her misery under due control, especially in a public place ; but these Germans are a more simple natural people.

Having by degrees established some relations between the party and myself by ordering some coffee and handing it round, and then letting the baby play with my watch, I asked what it was that ailed the girl. The girl turned round and poured out a torrent of eloquence, which, however, considerably exceeding the pace at which any foreign language enters into my apprehension, was totally lost upon me ; except that I perceived she had some complaint against somebody, and that she had a noble open countenance which, from long experience of the witness-box, I felt was telling me an unusual proportion of truth. One part of the discourse I perceived very clearly to be about money, and as she touched her gown (which was very neat and nice), it had something to do with the price of the said gown.

We then talked of England, whereupon she asked me to take her with me as a servant. This abrupt speech might astonish some persons ; but not those who have travelled much. I dare say the same request has often been made to you, Milverton.

*Milverton.* Oh, yes. They fancy this is an

earthly paradise for getting money, bounded by a continual fog.

*Ellesmere.* She then questioned me much as to the distance of England from where we were. And as I saw she was in a desperate mood, and might attempt some desperate adventure, I took care to explain to her the distance and the difficulties of the journey. Besides which, I contrived, putting the severest pressure on my stock of German, to convey to her that London was rather an extensive town, containing two millions of people, and that it was not exactly the place for an unfriended young girl to be wandering about.

“The same thing everywhere, everywhere,” she exclaimed, in a tone of mournful reproach which I felt was levelled at our unchivalrous sex in general.

I felt interested to understand her story, and beginning to question her in detail again, ascertained so far, that she was or had been a servant, that she had been accustomed to take charge of children, having had eleven under her charge, that the wages were most wretched, which they certainly were; but still, it was not that or any of the ordinary kind of grievances which was now distressing her. Whenever we came to the gist of the discourse, she became more emphatic and I more stupid. At last I

bethought me that if she were to write out what she had to say, I could then understand it well enough. This was a bright idea, and one which I was able to convey to her. She was to bring me the writing on the ensuing morning in the great square. And having come to this agreement we parted ; I taking care, with lawyer-like caution, to tell her that I did not know whether I could be of any use to her, with other discouraging expressions.

The next morning, duly fortified with my pocket dictionary, I sat myself down to read her statement. Ah, how clearly the whole scene is before me. It was on a broad bench, close to a hackney-coach stand, within sight of the palace. She looked over me and read aloud ; and when I could not make out a word, we paused, and the dictionary was put in requisition. The nearest hackney-coachman lying back on his box threw now and then an amused glance at the proceeding. Hers was a simple touching story, touchingly told. I now know every word, every letter of it ; but then it was very hard for me to comprehend.

It began by giving her birth, parentage, and education. She was born of poor parents in the country, a few miles out of the town. She was now an orphan. She had come into service in the town. Her master

had endeavoured to seduce her; but she had succeeded in giving some notion of her miserable position to a middle-aged man, and friend of her family, who had taken an interest in her, and promised to receive her into his service. Then she gave warning to her mistress, who could not imagine the cause, and was displeased at her leaving. She could not tell her mistress for fear of vexing her.

The character given by the mistress (which I saw) went well with this statement, as it was the praise of a person displeased.

The new master that was to be, had told her where to go to (the lodgings where she was now staying), and ordered her to get decent clothes before coming into his service. He did not live in that town. She left her place accordingly, provided herself with the necessary things, and awaited his orders. Meanwhile his plans were changed. He had just married, was probably about to travel, and wrote that he could not take her in. I am not sure that there was any deliberate wrong-doing or treachery on his part—merely a wicked carelessness; forgetting what a thing it is for a poor girl to be out of place, and not knowing that she had taken the step, perhaps, at the time he wrote. She had written again, and had

received no answer. She was left in debt and in the utmost distress.

This is the substance of what I eventually got out by cross-examination. She had been out into the suburbs in search of a place when I met her yesterday. The woman with the child, who was no relation, had reiterated to me there that she was a good girl and in great distress.

The usual wicked easy way of getting out of her difficulties had been pressed upon her—*Ich mag das Geld nicht auf eine schlechte Art bekommen, sonst würde ich es in kurzer Zeit haben*; but she trusted that “the dear God would never permit this, so she put her trust in Him.” *Ich hoffe aber, der liebe Gott wird das nicht zugeben, denn ich verlasse mich auf Ihn.*

I remember that, occasionally, while we were spelling over what she had written, her large beautiful hand (do not smile, Milverton, a hand may be most beautiful and yet large) rested on the page. There was a deep scar upon it, the mark of a burn, that told of some household mishap. I have seen many beautiful hands before and after, but none so beautiful to me.

At last we got through the writing and paused. “This is a bad business,” I exclaimed; and then I fell into a reverie, not upon her particular case so

much as upon the misery that there is in the world. At last I looked up and felt quite remorseful at the wistful agonised expression of the girl, whom I had been keeping in suspense all this time while indulging my own thoughts. She evidently thought (you know the extremely careless ill-dressed figure I generally am) that to assist her was quite out of my power. And so it was at the moment, for I had not the requisite silver about me. Indeed why should the rich carry any money about with them, when they have always the poor to borrow it from? However, I had some silver in my pocket and gave her that, promising to bring the rest. Her ecstasy was unbounded: of course she began to cry (no woman is above that); though seeing my excessive dislike to that proceeding, she did the best to suppress it, only indulging in an occasional sob. Her first idea was what she could do for the money. She would work for any time. We had found out that writing was better than talking; and here are her very words (I always carry them about with me), "*Was soll ich Ihnen für einen Dienst dafür thun?*" "What shall I do for you in the way of any service for this?" "Nothing," I replied, "but only to be a good girl."

One thing I have omitted to tell you: but I may as



well tell it. It is no matter now. While we were reading over the letter, I happened to ask her whether she had a lover. I had hardly asked the question before I would have given anything to have been able to recall it, as we sometimes do in Court when a question is objected to. Her simple answer came crushing into my ears, "Yes, but a poor man and far away." She thought my object in asking was to ascertain whether there was any help to be got from any other quarter : this she answered, so like her sensible self, without any bridling-up or nonsense of any kind—a simple answer to a simple question. But the words went down like a weight into my heart, which has never been quite lifted off again. In short, Milverton, I loved.

What should possess me to-day to tell you this wild story I know not. I know you really care for nothing but great interests and great causes, as you call them. With intense mad love for any one human being you cannot sympathise. I always noted the same in you from your boyhood upwards. Talk to you of a body of men—of a class—of a million, for instance, of people suffering anything, and you are immediately interested. But for any one of us you care nothing. I see through you, and always have. But I like you. Do not answer me, you know it is true.

I did not answer him ; though knowing what he said to be most untrue, and yet to have just that dash of plausibility in it which makes injustice so hard to unravel. He proceeded. I saw Gretchen (that was her name) more than once again, and had a great deal of talk with her, finding my first impressions amply verified ; and I still think her one of the best intellects, and most beautiful natures, I have ever seen. I had in my pocket a very learned letter from one of the German Professors of law to whom I had delivered a letter of introduction on passing through his town, on some points of jurisprudence, referring to Savigny's work. The parts of this which had been unintelligible I made her construe to me ; some of it was quite independent of technicalities, but merely required hard thinking and clear explanation. The girl with my help made it all out. But of course it was not of such themes that she liked to talk ; for women love personal talk, and their care is to know, not what men think about, but what they feel. One speech of hers dwells in my mind. "You must be very happy at home," she said. I thought of my mouldy chambers and the kind of life I lead, and replied with an irony I could not check, "very : " and so satisfied her gentle questionings.

I did not delay my departure longer than I had at

first intended ; for in these cases when you have done any good, it is well to be sure you do not spoil it in any way. She would not have any more money than a trifling sum that was a little more than sufficient to pay off the debts already due, and they amounted to the very same sum she had originally mentioned to me in the gardens. We parted. Before parting she begged me to tell her my name : then timidly she kissed my hand ; and, bursting into tears, threw her hood over her face and hurried away a little distance. Afterwards I saw her turn to watch the departure of the huge diligence in which I had ensconced myself.

*Milverton.* And you never saw her any more ?

*Ellesmere.* Once more. Not being a philosopher or a philanthropist, I do not easily forget those I once care for. I studied how to protect her in every way. I mastered the politics of that German town ; and learnt all the intricacies of the little Court there. I ascertained everything respecting our relations with it, and who amongst our diplomatists was desirous of the residence there, when there should be a change. I busied myself more in politics than I had done ; and I believe I must own that my speech on the —— intervention, which had its merits and cost me great labour, was spoken for Gretchen. Of course, I need hardly say that I spoke only what I most sincerely

thought; but I should probably have let politics alone but for her sake. At last there was an opportunity of a new appointment being made of a Minister to that German Court; and the man who wished for it, and whose just claims I had aided as I best could, obtained it. His wife, Lady R., one of those brilliant women of the world who are often more amiable than we give them credit for being, had long noticed the care with which I had cultivated her society. She imagined it was for one of her beautiful daughters, and did not look unkindly upon me. Before she went to reside at — I undeceived her, telling her the whole truth (the best thing in such a case) and binding her to secrecy. She promised to look out for Gretchen, and to take her into her household. I told Lady R. that Gretchen had a lover, and said, that if anything could be done for him, without lifting him out of his rank, it should be. Neither would I have Gretchen made anything different from what she was. I could have given her money by handfuls; but that is not the way to serve people. At the same time I implored Lady R. to let me know immediately in case anything should ever occur to break off the marriage.

*Milverton.* And you would have put in your suit and married this girl?

*Ellesmere.* There was but little chance, I fear ; but you may be sure no opportunity would have escaped me. As for the world, I am one of the few persons who really care but little for it. The hissing of collected Europe, provided I knew the hissers could not touch me, would be a grateful sound rather than the reverse—that is, if heard at a reasonable distance.

Well, but I told you I saw Gretchen once more. Yes, once more. You may remember that some time ago, I had a very severe illness, and was not able to attend the Courts on an occasion when I was much wanted. This appeared in the newspapers of the day, and so, I conjecture, came to the knowledge of Gretchen ; who, in her quiet indefatigable way, had learned English, and was a great student, as I afterwards heard, of English newspapers. She had also contrived to learn more about my life than I chose to tell her when I answered her question about my being happy ; and the poor girl had formed juster notions of the joyousness and comfort of a lawyer's chambers in London. She begged for leave of absence to visit a sick friend : Lady R. conjectured, I believe, where she was going, and consented.

A few days afterwards there was a knock at my

door (I was still very ill and unable to leave my sitting-room, but solacing life as best I could by the study of a great pedigree-case), when my clerk, with an anxious and ashamed countenance, put his head in, made one of these queer faces which he does when he thinks a great bore is wishing to see me and that I had better say "No," and exclaimed, "A young woman from Germany, sir, wants to see you." I knew, instinctively, who it was, but had the presence of mind to make a gesture signifying I would not see her (for I could not have spoken), and I was afraid in my present state of weakness I should betray myself in some way, if I were to see her unprepared. While the parleying was going on in the passage, I collected myself sufficiently to ring for my clerk and tell him, he might appoint the young woman to come in the afternoon. By that time I had reflected upon my part, and was somewhat of myself again. She came: I scolded and protested; she did nothing in reply, but look at me, and say how thin I was; and there was no resisting the quiet, affectionate, discreet way in which she installed herself every day for some hours as head nurse. Even my old laundress relaxed so far as to say that Gradgin (for that was what she called her) was a good girl and not hoity-toity: and my clerk, Peter, a very cantankerous fellow, was heard

to remark, that for his part he did not like young women much, but Miss Gradgin was better than most, and certainly his master did somehow eat more of anything made by her than by anybody else, and never threatened now to throw the chicken-broth he brought in at his head.

I jest at these things, Milverton: and in truth what remains for us often in this world but to jest? Which of the Queens was it, by the way, who on the scaffold played with the sharpness of the axe, and said something droll about her little neck? Well, I jest; but this visit of Gretchen's was a very severe trial to me. It is a common trial though, I daresay. No doubt many a person dotes upon or adores some one else, who is, happily, as unconscious of the doting or adoration as Ram Dass, or any other heathen deity, of the fanatic love of his worshippers. To the loving person, however, it is like walking over hot iron with no priest-anointed feet, and yet with unmoved countenance, not even allowed to look stoical. I could not resist listening sometimes to Gretchen's wise, innocent, pleasant talk about all the new things she was seeing; and perhaps if I had not kept carefully before me the claims of the absent peasant lover, some day when she was moving about me like sunlight in the room, I might in some

moment of frenzy, which I should never have forgiven myself, have thrown myself at her feet and asked her to take these dingy chambers and my faded self and all my belongings under her permanent control. But wiser, sterner, juster thoughts prevailed.

I got better, and it was time for Gretchen to be thinking of going. Of course no foreigner can leave London without seeing the Thames Tunnel; and I observed that the morose Peter, though in general very contemptuous of sight-seeing and sight-seers, was wonderfully ready to escort Gretchen to see the Tunnel, which I thought a great triumph on her part. I spared myself the anguish of parting with her: a case came on rather unexpectedly in a distant part of the country, and I was sent for "special," as we say. Kings and tetrarchs might have quarrelled for what I cared; I would not have meddled in their feuds to lose one hour of Gretchen's sweet companionship, if I might have had it heartily and fairly; but, as things were, I thought this a famous opportunity for making my escape without a parting. And so I started suddenly for the North, bidding Gretchen adieu by letter, expressing all my gratitude for her attention, and being able to rule and correct my expressions as it seemed good to me. Before I returned she had left, taking leave of me in a fond kind letter, in which she



blamed me much for being so regardless of my health, and added a few words about my evident anxiety to get rid of her, which sounded to me like some wild strain of irony. Ever since, my chambers have seemed to me very different from what they were before : I would not quit them for a palace. One or two new articles of furniture were bought by Gretchen, who effected a kind of quiet revolution in my dusky abode. These are my household gods.

One of her alterations I must tell you. You know my love for light and warmth ; like that of an Asiatic long exiled in a Northern country, whose calenture is not of green fields, but of sufficient heat and light once more to bathe in. Well, Gretchen soon found out my likings ; and this was one of her plans to gratify me and make me well. My principal room has a window to the south-west, a bay-window, or rather a window in a bayed recess. After ascertaining, as well as she could, from Peter what were the limits throughout the year of the sun's appearance on the walls of this recess, on a sudden one morning Gretchen came in with a workman and two antique looking-glasses of the proper size, which (a present of her own, and taxing her resources highly) she fixed one on each side of the recess, from whence they have ever since thrown a reflected light into the room,

which makes it feel at times uncomfortable, like an ill-dressed person in a great company. It is a trifling thing to mention to you, but very characteristic of her.

I have said nothing to you, Milverton, which can describe herself; and, indeed, I always look upon all descriptions of women, in books and elsewhere, as having something mean, poor, and sensuous about them. I may tell you that she always, from the first time I saw her, reminded me a little of the bust of Cicero. She had the same delicate critical look, though she was what you would call a great large girl. She might have been a daughter of his if he had married, what he would have called, a barbarian German woman. In nature, she has often recalled to me Jeannie Deans, only that she has more tenderness. She would have spoken falsely (I am sorry to say) for Effie; and would have died of it.

Lady R., when she was over here some little time ago, said to me, to comfort me, I suppose, that though Gretchen was a sweet girl, she did not quite see what there was in her to make her so attractive to a man like me. But these women do not always exactly understand one another, or appreciate what makes them dear to particular men. She added, "But still I

do not know how it was Gretchen became the great authority in our household: they all referred to her about everything, and she did a good deal of their work." In fact, she was the personification of common sense; only that what we mean by common sense is apt to be hard, overwise, and disagreeable: hers was the common sense of a romantic person, and of one who had great perception of the humorous. I think I hear her low, long-continued dimpling laugh as I used to put forth some of my odd theories about men and things, to hear what she would say. And she generally did say something fully to the purpose. But action was her forte. There was a noiseless, soft activity about her like that of light.

*Milverton.* You speak of her as if she were dead. Is it so?

*Ellesmere.* No: much the same thing—married. There was an opportunity for advancing her lover. It was done, not without my knowledge. She had by this time saved some money. They were married six months ago. I sent the wedding gown. Do not let us talk any more about it. I tell it you to show you how deeply I care about your subject; for sometimes I think with terror, as I go along the streets, that but for my providential interference, Gretchen might have

been like one of those tawdry girls who pass by me. Yes, she might. I observed that she had a pure horror of debt: and I do not know that circumstances might not have been too strong for her virtue. For by nature virtuous, if ever woman was, she was.

Ellesmere was silent for a few minutes. Then he said, "Let us have no more of this talk to-day, or, indeed, at any time, unless I should begin the subject. One of the greatest drawbacks upon making any confidence is that, as regards that topic, you have then lost the royal privilege of beginning the discourse about yourself, and another can begin to speak to you, or to think (and you know that he is thinking), about the matter, when you do not wish to be so much as thought of by any one."

He then began to speak about some chemical experiments which he wanted me to try; and from that went on to talk about infusoria, wishing me to undertake some microscopical investigations to confirm, or disprove, a certain theory of his; adding, by way of inducement, "These lower forms and orders of life ought, you know, to be very interesting to people in the country, who themselves, in comparison with us, the inhabitants of towns, can only, by courtesy, and for want of more precise and accurate language, be

said to live. In fact, their existence is entirely molluscous." Thus, in his usual jeering way, he concluded a walk which left me with matter for meditation for many a solitary ramble over the downs, which we then traversed on our way homewards.

## CHAPTER VIII.

IT is not often in the course of our lives, especially after we have passed our nonage, that we can reckon upon being thoroughly undisturbed and free to think of what we like for a given time. It is one of the advantages of travelling in a carriage alone, that it affords an admirable opportunity for thinking. The trees, the houses, the farm-yards, the woods flit by, and form a sort of silent chorus from the outward world. There is a sense of power in overcoming distance at no expense of muscular exertion of one's own, which is not without an elevating and inspiring influence upon the thoughts. The first thing, however, is, that we are pretty nearly sure of being undisturbed. The noise around us is a measured one, and is accounted for; it does not, therefore, fret the most nervous person. Dr Johnson thought that travelling in a post-chaise with a pretty woman was one of the highest delights in life. Very ungallantly I venture to suggest that the pretty woman had better be omitted. She will talk some-

times, and break the whole charm, thus preventing you even from thinking about her.

Having such notions of the high merits appertaining to the inside of a post-chaise in motion ; in fact, considering it a place which, for the research of truth, may be put in competition with the groves of Academus, it was with some pleasure that I found myself alone in the carriage which had conveyed Ellesmere to the neighbouring railway station on his return to town. It was the first time since our walk to the downs that I had had to myself, and been able to think over all that he had then told me. He was right in saying that his story bore close reference to the subject I have been considering. That such a man should find so much to attach himself to in this poor German girl, who might so easily have been found in a very different situation, makes one think with dismay how some of the sweetest and highest natures amongst women may be in the ranks of those who are abandoned to the rude address of the coarsest and vilest of men. I say "some of the sweetest and highest natures," for there is a cultivation in women quite independent of literary culture, rank, and other advantages. They are more on a level with each other than men. I do not reckon this as a proof of their excellence : nor do I at all

indulge in the fancy that there is something so peculiarly charming in uncultivated people. On the contrary, they are seldom just, seldom tolerant ; and, as regards innocence and child-like nature, these merits abound in persons the most cultivated, and even the most conversant with the world. I have no doubt we all appear simple and unsophisticated enough to superior beings. It is not, therefore, that I mean to laud the innocence and naïveté of ignorance : but only to point out that there is a certain platform, as it were, of grace and unselfishness—of tact, delicacy, and teachableness—on which I have no doubt an immense number of women are placed, which makes any corruption of such high capabilities the more to be regretted.

Dunsford, in his *Friends in Council*, has failed in representing Ellesmere, if he has not shown him to be a most accomplished man and a thorough gentleman ; not exactly the conventional gentleman, but a man whom savages would certainly take to be a chief in his own country, showing high courtesy to others with a sort of coolness as regards himself : the result of being free from many of the usual small shames, petty ends, trivial vanities, and masked social operations which dwarf men in their intercourse with



others, or make them like clowns daubed over in ugly patches. His pursuits, as may have been seen, are on a larger sphere than those of most lawyers. Very observant, too, of the world, I have scarcely a doubt he was right in his high appreciation of that girl's character.

We sometimes think we have no romance left ; but with all our borrowed ways of thinking, our foolish imitative habits, our estimations grosser than those of Portia's disappointed suitors, some of us occasionally do still look at things and people as they are. And that alone produces romance enough.

I wonder whether Gretchen had any love for him ! Alas, I suspect, from a fond wistful way in which I once saw Lucy look at him, that there is an English girl who would mightily like to occupy Gretchen's place in his heart. But he casts not a thought at her : such is the perversity of things.

But I must turn from thinking about Ellesmere to the consideration of my subject, which is favoured by this quiet moment and this retired spot. It seems to me that the best thing I can do will be, not so much to seek for new arguments and new views, as to strengthen and enlighten those already put forward in a preceding chapter.

I spoke, for instance, there of the cause that poverty was of this sin. Now women do not equally partake with men in the general poverty in a land, but they have to endure an undue proportion of it, by reason of many employments being closed to them ; so that the sex which is least able and least fitted to seek for employment by going from home, finds the means of employment at home most circumscribed.

I cannot but think that this is a mismanagement which has proceeded, like many others, from a wrong appreciation of women's powers. If they were told that they could do many more things than they do, they would do them. As at present educated, they are, for the most part, thoroughly deficient in method. But this surely might be remedied by training. To take a very humble and simple instance. Why is it that a man-cook is always better than a woman-cook ? Simply because a man is more methodical in his arrangements, and relies more upon his weights and measures. An eminent physician told me, that he thought that women were absolutely deficient in the appreciation of time. But this I hold to be merely one instance of their general want of accuracy ; for which there are easy remedies : that is, easy if begun early enough. Now it does seem perfectly ludicrous

that in the dispensing of women's gear they should need the intervention of men. I dare say there is some good reason for the present practice, some advantage gained ; but I should think it likely that this advantage would be far more than counter-balanced by the advantage of employing women altogether in these transactions.

Again, in the processes of the arts, and in many ways which I have not time or space to enter upon, women might be provided with new sources of employment, if they were properly trained.

But the truth is, there is a great want of ingenuity and arrangement throughout the world in not providing employment for its unemployed, both men and women. Things that imperatively want to be done stare you in the face at every corner.

If we consider the nature of the intellect of women, we really can see no reason for the restrictions laid upon them in the choice of employments. They possess talents of all kinds. Government, to be sure, is a thing not fit for them, their fond prejudices coming often in the way of justice. Direction also they would want, not having the same power, I think, of imagination that men have, nor the same method, as I observed before. But how well women might work under direction. In how many ways where tact

and order alone are required they might be employed, and also, in how many higher ways, where talent is required.

I suppose I shall have to say something about unhappy marriages as a cause of the evil I have named as the great sin of great cities. Of course there are a great many unhappy marriages. A weighty moral writer of the present day intimates that there is no medium in the felicity, or infelicity, of marriage ; that it is either the summit of joy, or the depth of torment. I venture to differ from him in this respect. On the contrary, it seems to me probable that in marriage the whole diapason of joy and sorrow is sounded, from perfect congeniality, if there be such a thing (which I doubt), to the utmost extent of irritable uncongeniality.

How this may be I know not, but though unhappiness in marriage may form some justification of, or, at least some explanation for, other connections more or less permanent, yet I contend no want of domestic love or peace can justify the particular sin which is the subject of our present theme.

At the same time I am far from pronouncing that the law of divorce may not require considerable modification ; but really there are so many large

questions to deal with in reference to this present subject, that I feel I cannot presume to enter upon this one of divorce, to discuss which properly would require any one man's life. I cannot, however, omit all allusion to it, as it has undoubted reference to the subject in hand ; and I may remark that it is a great deal easier to pass by Milton, or to sneer at him, for his great work on *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, than to answer the arguments therein contained. The truth is, that there is scarcely anywhere a mind sufficiently free from the overruling influence of authority on these and similar subjects to be able clearly and boldly to apprehend the question for itself.

However, it does not become us to pronounce, if we are to judge from the results only, that our present notions of marriage are the best possible. I can imagine a native of some country where polygamy is practised, contending that the state of things in his own country in this respect is preferable to that in ours ; not, perhaps, as producing less misery, but at any rate less dishonour both to men and women. We should find it difficult to gainsay him in this, as of course he would make much of the immense and obvious evils of the sin we have been considering.

The greatest and most dangerous objection—I should rather say assertion—which will be made against anything that has been said in this chapter and the two preceding ones, is one that will be uttered with a derisive smile by men of the world, as they are called ; that is, of a very small section of it. Thinking they are deeply cognisant of the human heart, because they are very much afraid of its aberrations, and that they are fully aware of the powers of the imagination, from having little themselves and discouraging the little they ever had—lapped, perhaps, in a kind of prosperity which singularly blinds those who have the misfortune to enjoy an uninterrupted career of it—bounded by a small circle of equally well-conditioned, self-satisfied individuals—men of this kind pronounced not only upon the influx and efflux of tea, coffee, sugar and gold (in which, by the way, their dicta are generally wrong), but they are also able specifically to declare about the ebb and flow of the passions or the affections ; about the tenderest and the most delicate of the relations in human life. Talk to any man of this worldly class about moral causes, or religious influences, he is equally at home with them, as if you were to ask him about the subjects most “immersed in matter.” I can see the self-sufficient way in which if he had lived some seven hundred

years ago, after the first crusade, he would have pronounced with a wave of his hand after dinner, that there never could be such another adventure again, as the first had by no means been found to pay. But soon all Europe is listening to the clink of hammers upon harness, and thousands, hundreds of thousands, are repeating an adventure not good in a commercial sense, but still which gave a dignity to them such as the stayers at home never attained.

Having damaged, as much as I can, the imaginary opponents—who I know, however, will prove real ones—before I bring their saying into presence, I will now tell what that saying will assuredly be.

In answer to all that has been urged in the way of remedy for this evil, they will simply reply, “But these things always must be; the laws of supply and demand hold good in this case as in others: to think otherwise is the mere dream of writers and other ideologists: no wonder Napoleon disliked such people: we do too.”

To this, taking them on their own ground, I would reply that at any rate the force of circumstances (a phrase they delight in) may be so adapted and modified as only to meet the exact necessities of the case. I mean, for instance, that those by nature most inclined to innocence should have the fairest oppor-

tunities of remaining innocent ; that, in short, it should be the worst people that fell into the worst ways. This, of course, is only an ideal scheme too ; but there might be a practical tendency in that direction.

In reality, however, it is the greatest mistake to suppose that such laws of supply and demand are not overruled by much higher influences. All things depend for their ultimate aim and end on the spirit in which they are undertaken ; which spirit cannot well be concealed. The measured generosity of mean people, whose gifts are all strictly related to duty, does not deceive others ; the bystander knows that these people are not generous, though he cannot exactly confute them from their words or their deeds. Again, people may pretend to be religious ; but if the real spirit is not in them, its absence is soon felt. I am merely giving these as instances of the deficiency of the right spirit being felt, or perceived, even when the outward deeds or words are there. But the spirit which results from conviction, and which gradually modifies public opinion, is one of the most powerful things known : who shall put limits to it ? It will meet and occasionally master all the passions. Take the question of duelling, for instance ; if you could have told a man of former times, when duelling was



rife, that it would soon be almost done away with, "What!" he would have exclaimed, "will there be no lovers, no jealous husbands, no walls to take the inner side of, no rudeness, no drunkenness, no calumny, no slander? And, if there are, how will the quarrels that must arise from these things be adjusted? Do not talk such Utopian nonsense to me, but come and let us practise in the shooting-gallery." And, yet, see how stealthily, how unassumingly, how completely public opinion, the result of a wise and good spirit gradually infused into men, has disarmed duellism; as quietly, in fact, as the king's guard in former days would have taken away the weapons of any two presumptuous gentlemen who brought their quarrelling too near his Majesty's vicinity in his parks.

One of the kind of reproaches that will ever be made, with much or little justice (generally with little justice), against any men who endeavour to reform or improve anything, is that they are not ready with definite propositions; that they are like the Chorus in a Greek play, making general remarks about nature and human affairs, without suggesting any clear and decided course to be taken. Sometimes this reproach is just; but very often, on the

other hand, it is utterly unreasonable. Frequently the course to be taken in each individual instance is one that it would be almost impossible to decide, still more to lay down with minuteness, without a knowledge of the facts in the particular instance: whereas what is wanted is not to suggest a course of action, but a habit of thought which will modify not one or two actions only, but all actions that come within the scope of that thought.

Again, there are people who are not so unreasonable as to expect suggestions that will exactly meet their own individual cases, but still they wish for general rules or general propositions to be laid down. There must be instant legislation to please them; something visibly done. And often it is needful that something should be done, which however falls, perhaps, under the functions of other men than the original social reformers. There is always such a belief in what is mechanical, that men of ordinary minds cannot assure themselves that anything is done, unless something palpable is before them; unless they can refer to a legislative act, or unless there is a building, an institution, a newspaper, or some visible thing, which illustrates the principle. But in reality the first thing is to get people to be of the same mind

as regards social evils. When once they are of this mind, the evils will soon disappear. A wise conviction is like light; it gradually dawns upon a few minds, but a slight mist rises also with this rise of light; as the day goes on and the light rises higher, spreads further, and is more intense, growth of all kinds takes place silently and without great demonstration of any kind. This light permeates, colours, and enlarges all it shines upon.

Now, to apply some of these thoughts to our present subject. I do not believe that there will always be a certain set amount of wrong-doing in this or in any other case. On the other hand, I do not expect that people will suddenly rush into virtue. To take a very humble instance, the suppression of smoke, one of the most visible evils in the world, how long a time it takes to subdue that? From Count Rumford's time to the present day, how many persons have written, preached, talked, experimented, on the subject? And if this long process has to take place in so obvious a matter, how much more must it be so in the subtler regions of men's minds, in their habits of justice, or of forethought? But, insensibly, even in these dim and remote regions, good counsels, or evil counsels, will eventually prevail—as quietly, perhaps, but as surely, as the submerged coral rock grows and

increases from the accumulations of minute, gelatinous, molluscous creatures.

The train of thought which I have described above did not of course occur to me in the methodical way in which I have now put it down, but with frequent breaks and interruptions both from internal thoughts and the aspect of external objects. Now it was the noise of the mill, now the beauty of some homestead, now the neatness of some well-cultivated field, or the richness of some full farmyard that claimed my attention. But when I had finished thinking of the answer that must be given to that worldly objection, "that there is a demand for wickedness, and that there must be a supply of it," I leaned back in the carriage and turned my mind to other branches of the subject. Just at that time, whether it was that a troop of little children came out of a school-house close to the road, or that I noticed the early budding in the hedgerows, as I passed along, I began to think of what had been alluded to in a former chapter; namely, what a beautiful thing youth is, and how sad that it should be spoilt at its outset. And I went on to think not only of the negative, that is, of the loss of so much beautiful life and promise, but of the positive misery inflicted, which surely is well worth taking into consideration.

Tragedy is very grand, with grand accessories,

“ Presenting Thebes’, or Pelops’ line,  
Or the Tale of Troy divine,”

when a purple-clad man, free from all the pettinesses of life, pours out a strain of sorrow which melts all hearts, and goes some way to dignify the sufferings of all humanity. But, after all, in some squalid den, as great if not a greater tragedy is often transacted, only without the scenery and decorations of the other, when some poor victim of seduction—now steeped in misery and sunk in the abysses of self-degradation, amidst blasphemy, subject to reviling that she scarcely hears or easily endures from habit—lies on the bed of sickness thinking of her mother’s gentle assiduities in some of the ailments of her childhood, and covers her face with her hands at the thought that that mother, dead, perhaps heart-broken, may now, a spirit, be looking down upon her. Well might Camoens wonder “That in so small a theatre as that of one poor bed, it should please Fortune to represent such great calamities. And I, too,” he says, “as if these calamities did not suffice, must needs put myself on their side ; for to attempt to resist such evils would be something shameless.”

I had meditated but a few minutes on this cry of anguish, which I seemed to hear as it came from the

dying bed of one of the most unfortunate of men of genius, and which I fancied, too, I heard from many other death-beds, when we turned out of the main road into the lanes which lead to Worth-Ashton. With all our pretences at governing or directing our thoughts, how they lie at the mercy of the merest accident! Once in these lanes I quitted my subject, and began to think how the way to my house might be shortened, and I was already deep in the engineering difficulties of the proceeding, when somewhat satirically I said to myself, What a mania you have for improving everything about you: could you not, my dear Leonard, spare a little of this reforming energy for yourself? One would think that you did not need it at all, to see the way you go on writing moral essays. Myself replied to me, This is a very spiteful remark of yours, and very like what Ellesmere would have said. Have I not always protested in the strongest manner against the assumption, that a writer of moral essays must be a moral man himself? Your friend Ellesmere, in reference to this very point, remarks that if all clergymen had been Christians, there would by this time have been no science of theology. But, jesting apart, it would be a sad thing indeed if one's ideal was never to go beyond one's own infirmities. However, myself agrees with you,

my dear I, so far, that it is much safer to be thought worse than better than one really is: and so blacken me as much as you like, and detract from me as much as you can, so that you do not injure my arguments or my persuasions. These I believe in, and will endeavour to carry out, just as if they had been uttered by the most irreproachable and perfect man in the world.

Maintaining this strange dialogue as stoutly as if there had been two persons instead of one in the carriage, I, or rather we (I wonder whether the editorial "we" is thus really dual, consisting of a man and his conscience)—we, I say, reached the gate of Worth-Ashton, pretty good friends with each other, and pleased with what we had thought over during our ride homewards.

## CHAPTER IX.

SINCE giving an account of my last reverie, I have been abroad for a short time, which has a little interrupted my work, but I now resume it with less feeling of weariness. I seldom think much during a tour. Indeed I come out to avoid thinking. I do not come to see what can be said or thought about any place, but to see it. Nevertheless, occasionally, I make a few notes consisting of some disjointed words, sufficient to recall to me, and to me only, what were the things which made an impression upon me.

One scene of this last journey I find commemorated in this short way ; and, as it is connected with some thoughts which carry on the subjects we (my readers and I) have lately been considering, I will recall it.

I shall not tell with any preciseness where I was : for if I did so, and did it well, my countrymen would flock to see the place. Not that I grudge them seeing anything. I suppose it happens to many of us, when abroad, to feel a little ashamed now and then of these same countrymen ; but yet I often think with pleasure



that even the most coarse and obtuse traveller brings back something besides self-conceit. One regrets that such opportunities are not always bestowed on minds fully able to profit by them ; but still one hopes that the most uncultivated people cannot escape getting some little advantage from their travels ; and if they were to stay at home, they would not the less remain uncultivated people.

Such travellers, however, would not thank me at all for describing a place which might thus get into the guide-books, and then, alas ! form one more spot which they must stop to look at, while they would far rather scamper over more ground and see more well-known places with great names. And as for the people who see things for themselves, they will not pass by the spot in question without giving it a due regard.

And what a scene it is ! Across a wide extent of water lies a bridge of immense length formed of uneven planks supported upon piles. There is no railing to the bridge, so that you seem almost upon the water, and you have the sensation of being at sea, with the grandeur and without the misery (as it is to me) of such a situation. Here and there is an oratory out-jutting from the line of planks, with a narrow edging of stone round it.

It was evening when I came upon the bridge, but not so late as to prevent me from seeing well the country about me, which at intervals went down into the water in narrow tongues of land, with buildings upon them. Immediately on the heights above me were an old tower and a monastery. Near the land some giant reeds rose up from the water, but did not sway to and fro the least, for there was not a breath of wind. The only noise was a plash of the water against a jetty, or the occasional jumping of a fish. On one of the strange-looking rocks there, which come abruptly out of the water as if asking you a question from the deep, reposed a meditative crane standing upon one leg

On one side of the bridge the hills rise up around you evenly, and the mountains are well balanced in form : on the other side, they descend abruptly and ascend again, leaving a most picturesque gorge. Two poplars were to be seen on the lowland near this gorge.

As evening deepened, and no more peasants returning homeward from the other side saluted me with their Good-night, the houses on the surrounding hills showed like glow-worms, and all was still, save the plash of the water on the jetty.

I find that new places do not always bring new

thoughts : sometimes they only intensify those which one has thought before. My mind went back to what is held by many persons to be a most prosaic subject—namely, education. And I thought how education, to be of any assured worth, must continue throughout life. “Now, Sir, that your education is ended,” exclaims the parent or the guardian to many a young man whose education, in the highest sense of the word, is now about to begin. This is the mistake that we make, too, about the poor. Reading and writing will not do alone. You might as well prepare for a liberal hospitality by a good apparatus for roasting and boiling, but never putting on any viands, so that the kitchen machinery went on grinding unceasingly, with no contentment to the appetites of the hungry. No : before we shall be able to make much of education, the highest amongst us must take larger views of it, and not suppose that it is a mere definite quantity of cultivation—defined according to the narrow limits of the fashions of the day.

If we saw this clearly, we should not be so anxious to succeed at college, at the bar, in parliament, in literature, or in any one art and science. We should perceive that there was a certain greatness of nature and acquirement to be aimed at, which we would not sacrifice to any one pursuit, worldly or artistic.

I stayed no longer on the bridge, but, ascending from it, made my way to a church which stood on the height close to the old tower. I marked in the light of the moon the slight, graceful, fantastic crosses in iron-work, telling that a peaceful population slept beside me ; and I sat down upon a low, broad stone wall. Thence you might see the wide waters, and some houses whose shadows lay upon the meads which skirted the waters.

“ And that is what all their ambition has come to,” I muttered to myself, turning to the crosses.

“ *Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens*”

(what an epithet !)

“ *Uxor : neque harum, quas colis, arborum,  
Te, præter invisas cupressus,  
Ulla brevem dominum sequetur.*”

These inevitable commonplace remarks mostly contain the profoundest and the sincerest thought. Yes, life may be but a poor business at the best ; nevertheless, said I to myself, I will try to do something yet, if life is spared to me. And so, resuming the subject which I had been working at before I left home (namely, the great sin of great cities), I began to consider what I should conclude by saying, just as if I had been in my study at Worth-Ashton.

mental and physical, in any efforts of a dubious tendency.

Now, I suppose, there are few things clearer to the human mind,

“To saint, to savage, and to sage,”

than that a father owes duties to his child. The dullest savages have seen that. Even Lacedæmonians, if they put off individual fatherhood, only did so by throwing it upon the community. How can a man, for a moment, imagine that any difference of rank (a mere earthly arrangement) between the mother of his child and himself can absolve him from paternal duties? I am lost in astonishment at the notion. And then imagine a man, performing all manner of minor duties, neglecting this first one the while. I always fancy that we may be surrounded by spiritual powers. Now, think what a horrible mockery it must seem to them, when they behold a man going to charity dinners, busying himself about flannel for the poor, jabbering about education at public meetings, immersed in different forms and ceremonies of religion, or raging against such things, because it is his duty, as he tells you; and at the door holding a link, or perhaps at that moment bringing home the produce of small thefts in a neighbouring, narrow

all in his own child, a pinched-up, haggard, out-cunning-looking little thing. Throw down, man, the flannel and the soap and the education and the Popery and Protestantism, and go up that narrow alley and tend your child: do not heap that palpable unjust burden on the back of a world which has enough at all times of its own to bear. If you cannot find your own child, adopt two others in its place and let your care for them be a sort of sin-offering. These are indignant words, but not more so than is right, I do believe, and I will not suppress one of them.

I am not ignorant of the difficulty of doing as I would have a man do in such a case. I do not write as a hermit or a clergyman, but as a man who thinks he knows something of the world. To own to immorality, to have that fair respectability spotted which we all value so much, and which is valuable, is no slight effort. A man who would beard a lion in his den, will shrink from doing what he ought to do, lest in so doing his neighbours should say unpleasant words about him behind his back. And yet there have been respectable men who have worn beards and strange hats which their neighbours did not wear; a more daring thing, perhaps, than owning to any immorality and endeavouring to repair it.

There are men who have secretly supported the burden of an illegitimate family : these at least are far better men than those who have joined the world in ignoring the existence of those they were bound to know of and to succour. Great kings, who can afford to set aside conventionality, before whom "nice custom curtseys," have boldly taken charge of their illegitimate children, and the world has not thought the worse of them for that, whatever it may justly have thought of the rest of their proceedings.

Some may reply, All this acknowledgment is encouragement. I say not. I say it holds before a person those duties, the general forgetfulness of which encourages to immorality. But, really, fine questions of general morality ought to be of second-rate importance to a man who is neglecting his first duties.

Is it not so? I said, looking round upon the thin shadows cast by the crosses over the graves. Silent population (any one of whom, the meanest, could now tell us more, mayhap, than all the wise men and doctors of this earth), silent population, is it not so? But none answered, unless a sigh of the breeze which now stole over the churchyard was the expression of one of those subtle chords of sympathy, rarely heard, still more rarely appreciated, which, perhaps, bring

animate, and what we call inanimate, nature into secret, strange communion.

I went down again upon the bridge, looked up at the solemn sky, for the moon was clouded now, and beneath me at the dim waters, being able to discern naught else : and still with some regard to what I had been thinking of in the churchyard, hoped that, in a future state at least, we might have some opportunity of loving and making our peace with those whom we have wronged here, and of seeing that our wrong, overruled by infinite goodness, has not wrought all the injury which there was in it to do.

So I walked on, having those dim apprehensions and undefined feelings which are yet, perhaps, the unfashioned substance of our sincerest and most exact afterthought, until darkness and the cold and the thought of to-morrow's journey drove me homeward—the home so emblematical for man in his pilgrimage—the home of an inn.



## CHAPTER X.

SO varied, extensive, and pervading are human distresses, sorrows, shortcomings, miseries, and misadventures, that a chapter of aid or consolation never comes amiss, I think. There is a pitiless, pelting rain this morning; heavily against my study windows drives the south-western gale; and altogether it is a very fit day for working at such a chapter. The in-door comforts which enable one to resist with composure, nay even to welcome, this outward conflict and hubbub, are like the plans and resources provided by philosophy and religion, to meet the various calamities driven against the soul in its passage through this stormy world. The books which surround me have been found an equal resource in both respects, both against the weather from without and from within, against physical and mental storms: and, if it might be so, I would pass on to others the comfort which a seasonable word has often brought to me.

If I were to look round these shelves, what a host of well-loved names would rise up, as those who have said brave or wise words to comfort and aid their brethren in adversity. It seems as if little remained to be said; but in truth there is always waste land in the human heart to be tilled.

The first thing which occurs to me is, that in bearing misfortune and vexation, as in overcoming temptation, there is a certain confidence which had better be put aside. This confidence sometimes results from a faith in reason, or rather a faith in our being exactly amenable to reason. For instance, it is some time before a man ceases to have a full belief in his own powers of accomplishing by direct means the absolute rule in his mind. If he is convinced of a thing, he says to himself, of course he will act accordingly. It astonishes him to hear of men—great men—who could not overcome, or found the greatest difficulty in overcoming, some small habit. Indeed, according to his brave imaginings, he intends always to overcome terrors and temptations, not merely to avoid them. Such is a very juvenile though a very natural mode of thinking. It requires a good many fallings in the mire, before a man finds that his own mind, temperament, and faculties, are things which will give him as much or more trouble to manage.

than his affairs, or his family, or than the whole world besides.

But as a man learns certain rules of health, so that it is said that at forty he is either a fool or a physician, so again, in dealing with the affections of the mind, there comes a skill which is not to be despised : and a man finds that the evil he cannot master he can ignore, the care he cannot efface he can elude, the felicity he cannot accomplish he can weigh and understand, and so reduce it from the size it would occupy in his imagination to its proper and reasonable limits. At last even sensitive people learn to suffer less from sensitiveness ; not that it grows dull by age, but that they learn to manage it better.

As a sound preparation for consolation of various kinds, I would begin, not by wilfully magnifying evils, but by showing their true proportions, which no doubt makes them seem larger than the imagination of the young, mistaught by many unsound fictions, pictures them to be. But nothing can be better than the truth. In its hand are all earthly and all heavenly consolations. As an instance of what I mean, there is a common fancy that an untoward event generally comes and goes with considerable rapidity—and there an end ; whereas it is very often a long-continued process. You do not fall sheer down a precipice,

out go tumbling by degrees, drinking in the full measure of danger and horror, catching at bushes here and there, now imagining for a moment that you have found security on some projecting ledge, and then finding the ground crumbling under you; and so you fall onwards till you reach the lowest level. The above is rather a strong image, but it may convey what I intend.

To illustrate it in practice—most men who have lived any time in the world, unless they have been the very minions of fortune (in which case, by the way, they are not much to be envied), have vexations of considerable standing—long lawsuits, disastrous adventures, an ill-conducted child, or some other terrible relative, a deplorable shame, often such a mingled tissue of fault and misfortune, that they cannot pity themselves sufficiently for blame at their folly; and they return from thinking over the folly to grieving over the ill-luck (as they call it) which brought out the folly so remarkably on that particular occasion.

Such a course of things requiring time for its development, can hardly fail to exercise in vexation all the moods and faculties of a man. A statesman does not perhaps work, intellectually speaking, harder than a lawyer in great practice; but the cares of the latter

are cares which begin and end with the day; not long lines of policy which require time and protracted care on one subject to work out, and where failure often comes by slow degrees.

Now, then, for the attempt at aid or consolation in such a case. Suppose the course of events I have spoken of to be one of failure and vexation—realised, or about to be so, to use an American phrase, and a very good one. A wise man (but that word "wise" is hardly a fit adjective to put before "man," it would be better to say, a man well-read in the heart) sees when he has suffered enough from these lengthened trains of evils, when he has exhausted the instruction from them; and though from time to time he may revert to them, as new views or new circumstances occur, enabling him to look down from a fresh height, as it were, on these long, dreary, disastrous passages of his life, yet he resolves substantially to have done with them; and when he finds them invading his mind and memory, adroitly he contrives at once to occupy it with something else.

With his wisdom of this world, Napoleon, no doubt, took care not to let his Russian campaign press fatally upon his recollections.

Another way for a man in such a case is to quote these disasters fearlessly to himself, and sometimes

others, as dear-bought bits of experience, now possessions : bought, it is true, at a most extravagant price, but still a little property, far better than nothing.

There is great humility in such plans as the above : the man who adopts them has found out, or at least he thoroughly suspects, his own weakness, and is willing to avail himself of any fair advantage to fight with the numerous enemies that surround him. Like a wise commander, he looks about for the slightest rising ground.

The same adroitness and practical wisdom may be manifested, not only in thought but in action. A friend of mine who had to attend a series of interviews, in which business was discussed of much vexation to him, and where he had to undergo, justly, much contumely, discovered that the occasions when he gave way to temper and behaved unwisely, were those in which he rode on a tiresome horse to the place of business. This is very natural : his nerves were a little ruffled in managing the unruly quadruped ; his powers a little impaired ; his composure slightly broken through to begin with : and, where things are nicely balanced, this slight disturbance of equanimity might turn the scale. Afterwards he took care to go to the place of these interviews always in the easiest

manner, and noted the good effect of this change. How trivial such an anecdote will seem, except to those who know the world well, and have seen how important small things may be when they happen to be brought into the same narrow compass of affairs with great ones !

But now, to pass to other subjects of human distress, and first among them, to all that is suffered from obloquy.

In bearing obloquy it may be noted, by way of consolation, that the world is always correcting its opinions ; that—except amongst your particular friends and relations, who have, perhaps, taken up a most erroneous view of your character, and, in the pride of a little knowledge, will never let it go—the general body of opinion is very fluent, and, at last, everything has a hearing. I have a private suspicion of my own, that some of those Roman emperors we read of have been maligned a little. Somebody else, perhaps, has the same notion ; if it is a just one, it will yet be investigated, and what there is true in it be sifted out.

It is certainly a long time to wait, for ages, to have an unjust opinion of you corrected ; but if fame is worth anything at all, then there is a consolation in thinking that eventually you have a chance of being fairly dealt with.

ought to have on the reason, and on the affection of its members.

As to the hold upon the reason : suppose we were taught to study scientifically; up to a certain point, something that admitted of all the lights of study ; and were then called upon to take the rest for granted, not being allowed to use to the uttermost the lights of history and criticism which have been admitted at first : how very inconclusive the so-called conclusions would appear to us. It would be like placing a young forest tree in a hothouse and saying, " Grow so far, if you like, expand to the uttermost in this space allowed to you, but there is no more room after you have attained these limits ; thenceforward grow inwards, or downwards, or wither away." Our Church is too impersonal, if I may use that expression : it belongs too much to books, set creeds and articles, and not enough to living men ; it does not admit easily of those modifications which life requires, and which guard life by adapting it to what it has to bear.

Again, as regards affection, how can any but those who are naturally devout and affectionate, which is not the largest class, have an affectionate regard for anything which presents so cold and formal an appearance as the Church of England. The services



are too long ; and, for the most part, are surrounded by the most prosaic circumstances. Too many sermons are preached ; and yet, after all, too little is made of preaching. The preachers are apt to confine themselves to certain topics, which, however really great and solemn, are exhaustible : at least as far as men can tell us aught about them. Order, decency, cleanliness, propriety, and very often good sense, are to be seen in full force in Anglican Churches once a week ; but there is a deficiency of heartiness.

The perfection to be aimed at, as it seems to me, as I have said before, would be a Church with a very simple creed, a very grand ritual, and a useful and devoted priesthood. But these combinations are only in Utopias, Blessed Islands, and other fabulous places ; no vessel enters their ports, for they are as yet only in the minds of thoughtful men.

In forming such an imaginary Church, there certainly are some things that might be adopted from the Roman Catholics. The other day I was at Rouen ; I went to see the grand old Cathedral ; the great western doors were thrown wide open right upon the market-place filled with flowers, and, in the centre aisle, not before any image, a poor woman and

her child were praying. I was only there a few minutes, and these two figures remained impressed upon my mind. It is surely very good that the poor should have some place free from the restraints, the interruptions, the familiarity, and the squalidness of home, where they may think a great thought, utter a lonely sigh, a fervent prayer, an inward wail. And the rich need the same thing too.

Protestantism, when it shuts up its churches, or allows discreditable twopences to be paid at the door, cannot be said to show well in these matters. In becoming so nice and neat, it seems to have brushed away a great deal of meaning and usefulness with the dirt and irregularity.

The great difficulty in reforming any Church lies, of course, in the ignorance of its members. Moreover, there may be great indifference to any Church, or dissatisfaction with it, amongst its members; but then people say to themselves, if we touch this or that thing which we disapprove of, we do not know what harm we may not be doing to people of less insight or less caution than ourselves; and so they go on, content with a very rude attempt indeed at communion in spiritual matters, provided they do not, as they would say, unsettle their neighbours. There is something good and humble in this; there is some-

thing also of indifference : if our ancestors had always been content with silent protests against the things they disapproved of, we might have been in a worse position than we are now.

To lay down any guidance for action in this matter is very difficult indeed. According to the usual course of human affairs, some crisis will probably occur, which nobody foresees, and then men will be obliged to speak and act boldly. It behoves them to bethink themselves, from time to time, of whither they are tending in these all-important matters.

The intellectual energies of cultivated men want directing to the great questions. If there is doubt in any matter, shall we not examine? Instead of that, men shut their thoughts up, and pretend to be orthodox—play at being orthodox. Meanwhile, what an evil it must be to the Church, if through unnecessary articles of faith, some of the best men are prevented from becoming clergymen, and many of the laity rendered less hearty members than they otherwise would be, of the Church.

Dwelling upon such thoughts, which are full of pain and anxiety—the thoughts of one who is always desirous to make the best of anything that is before him, and who is well aware how hard it is to reform

anything from without—I reached Dunsford's quiet little parsonage.

I found my old friend sitting in his garden in the very spot where I expected to find him, and for which I made my way without going through the house. In the middle of his kitchen-garden he has placed his beehives, and has surrounded them by a semicircle of juniper-trees about five feet high. In front of the beehives is a garden-seat, upon which I found him sitting and reciting Latin poetry to himself, which I had no difficulty in discerning, though I could not hear the words, to be from his favourite author, Virgil. Ellesmere, who views everything in a droll sarcastic way, says that our friend has chosen this particular seat in his garden from its being likely to be the place least disturbed by his sister and his curate. Though very good people, they are somewhat fussy, and given to needless gesticulation, which the bees dislike, and occasionally express their dislike in a very tangible manner. This spot, therefore, which is guarded by thousands of little soldiers, well-armed and well-equipped, distinguished from their human prototypes by gaining supplies and not by wasting them, affords a very secure retreat for our friend, where he can talk Virgil to himself for half an hour on a sunny morning.

It was not altogether without trepidation that I took my seat by his side amidst innumerable buzzing and whizzings; but he assured me with a smile that the bees would not hurt me, and in a minute or two their presence was only like a murmur of the distant wind through the trees.

I began at once to narrate to Dunsford the melancholy circumstances of Sir Robert Peel's death, which he had not heard of before, and which affected him deeply. Naturally his emotion increased my own. After I had told him the sad story, and answered his various questions about it, we remained silent for some time. I looked at the bees and thought of Manchester and other of the great hives and marts of industry. Dunsford went on with his Virgil: at last we then resumed our dialogue.

*Dunsford.* I do not wonder, my dear Leonard, that you were much affected by Sir Robert's death. I always felt how much you ought to sympathise with him. Indeed, there are two or three minor points in which you often put me a little in mind of him.

*Milverton.* It is strange I never heard you say so.

*Dunsford.* I did not think you much admired him, or would feel pleased at being likened to him in any thing. But this is what I mean,—it always appears to me that he had the most peculiar appreciation

the irrationality, and difficult to manage, of mankind. This was one of the things which made him so cautious. He never threw out his views or opinions till the moment when they were to be expressed in action. He did not want to provoke needless opposition. In short it was clear that he had the keenest apprehension of the folly of the world : he was very obstinate withal, or, as I had better say, resolved ; and very sensitive. He did nothing under the hope that it would pass easily, and cost him nothing to do ; and yet, at the same time, though he foresaw distinctly opposition and unreason and calumny, he felt them more perhaps than quite beseemed so wise and resolute a man when they did come. You best know whether I am right in attributing some of the same strength and some of the same weakness to the man who sits beside me.

*Milverton.* I neither admit nor deny ; but surely, Dunsford, it is not unwise nor imprudent to expect to have every degree of irrationality to battle with in anything one may undertake ; and time is seldom lost in preparing to meet that irrationality ; or strength, in keeping one's projects long before one. This is not merely worldly wisdom : such conduct results from a deep care for the success of the project itself.

*Dunsford.* Much of it is the result of temperament ;

and temperament is a part of our nature sooner developed than almost any other. How soon you see it in children, and how decisively marked !

*Milverton.* I cannot help thinking what a shrewd man you are, Dunsford, when you choose to be so. It is you who ought to conduct great law-cases, and write essays, instead of leaving such things to Ellesmere and myself, and pretending that you are the simple, unworldly, retired man, content to receive your impressions of men and things from your pupils. I suppose that watching these bees gives you a great insight into the management of states and the conduct of individuals. You recite Virgil to them, and they buzz into your ears bee-wisdom of the most refined kind.

*Dunsford.* Talking of essays, may I ask, Mr Milverton, what you are about ? You have not been near me for some time, and I always construe your absence into some new work.

*Milverton.* You are right in this case ; but I mostly avoid talking about what I am doing, at least, till it is in some state of forwardness. Talking prevents doing. Silence is the great fellow-workman.

*Dunsford.* The bees ?

*Milverton.* They buzz when they come home : they are silent enough at their work. Moreover, I

am beginning to care less and less about criticism during the progress of work, fearing less, you see, Dunsford, the irrationality of the world ; for what you mainly aim to get at by listening to criticism is not so much what will be understood, as what will be misunderstood—and that misunderstanding arises sometimes from your own error in thought, sometimes from bungling workmanship, sometimes from the irrationality of mankind ; or from some unfortunate combination of these various sources of error. My growing indifference to criticism, in fact the reason why my steps have not been bent so often lately in the direction of the Rectory, I would have you to believe, results, not from any increasing confidence in my own workmanship, but from my growing faith in the general rationality and kindness of mankind.

*Dunsford.* Humph !

*Milverton.* Besides, my endeavours and aspirations are so humble——

*Dunsford.* Humph !

*Milverton.* You will agree with me when you see what I mean. They are so humble that they do not require all that adverse criticism and consequent moulding which more elaborate schemes might do. For instance, I believe in the indefinite improveability of ourselves and of everything around us. Do not be



frightened, and look up so strangely, Dunsford : I do not mean perfectibility. Now, if by way of carrying out this belief of mine, I had any scheme of social regeneration, in which everything and everybody was to be put in his or its right place, of course it would have been necessary for me to have come very often over to the Rectory, to drink in sound wisdom in the way of all kinds of comment, objection, and elaboration, from you and Lucy, and these wise bees.

*Dunsford.* I declare, Milverton, when Ellesmere is not with us, you play both his part and your own : but go on.

*Milverton.* No—but, seriously, my dear Dunsford, to go on with my schemes of improveability, I assure you they are on a very humble basis. Looking around, I see what slight things are often the real hindrances to the best endeavours of men. I would aim to take these hindrances out of a man's path. Mark you, I do not expect that he will therefore become a greater man, but he will certainly be able to act more like one. To descend to particulars, why I delight so much in sanatory reform is not so much in the thing itself, if I may say so, as in the additional power and freedom it gives to mankind. I do not know what social arrangements will be good for the coming generation, what

churches will be best for them, what forms of legislation ; but I am sure that in whatever they do, they will be entangled with fewer difficulties, and will act more healthfully and wisely, if they are healthy men themselves.

*Dunsford.* Good doctrine, I think.

*Milverton.* In the same way I would seek to remove all manner of social disabilities ; always again with a view to the future, that the removal of these disabilities may give room for more freedom of thought and action.

*Dunsford.* I do not quite understand this, but do not wait to explain : go on.

*Milverton.* It is for the same reasons that I delight in education (and you know that I do not mean a small thing by education) because of its enabling powers, to use a legislative phrase. Here again I do not pretend to see what will become of people when educated, or to suggest the forms that such discipline will ultimately fit them for ; but I cannot but believe that it will make any people into material more malleable in the hands of the wise and good—of those who should be, and who to a certain extent are, the leaders of each generation. Indeed, I believe that always as men become greater, they are more easy to deal with.

*Dunsford.* I begin to see what you would be at.

*Milverton.* I conceive that as civilization advances, a thousand little complexities arise with it. To untie them in any way may be a humble effort, but seems to me a most needful one. What we are ever wanting is to give freedom without licence : to free a man from mean conformity——

*Dunsford.* By making him conform to something higher. I think, Milverton, I have assisted in pointing this out to you when I was afraid that you were making too much war upon conformity.

*Milverton.* It is only one of many things, my dear friend, which I have learned from you.

*Dunsford.* Thank you, my dear Leonard. I must say you have always been most willing to give more than due heed to anything your old tutor has said, with the exception of the advice he used to tender to you at College about getting up certain problems in the Differential and Integral Calculus.

*Milverton.* And I wish I had listened to that advice also.

*Dunsford.* But are you not a little afraid, my friend (not that I would say one word against any good purpose you may have), that with all your imaginary cultivation and enabling men to act more freely and wisely by the removal of small disabilities,

which yet I admit may be great hindrances : are you not afraid that after all we shall advance into something very tiresome, somewhat of a dead level, which observers even now say is very visible in the world—no great man, but a number of decent, ordinary, cultivated, commonplace persons? I believe I am now talking Ellesmere to you ; for, in reality, I prefer the advancement of the great mass of mankind to any pre-eminence of a few : but still I should like to hear what you have to say to this objection.

*Milverton.* I am delighted that you have raised it. I suspect there is a great delusion in this matter. The notion that there is a dead level in modern times is a mistake : *it is only that there are more eminences.* Formerly, one class or kind of men made a noise in the world, or at least made the chief noise ; and, looking across the hazy distances of time, we are deluded by great names. An Alexander, a Timour the Tartar, an Attila, a Charlemagne, loom large in the distance. There were not so many ways to pre-eminence then—added to which, I should be very slow to connect greatness of thought, or greatness of nature, with resounding deeds.

*Dunsford.* Surely at the latter end of the fifteenth, and in the sixteenth century, there were unrivalled great men—a galaxy of them.

*Milverton.* Yes, I admit; and no man looks up to some of the personages of that era with more reverence and regard than I do: and, moreover, I would not contend that there may not be an occasional galaxy, as you have termed it, of such men. But all I have to contend against is, that the tendency of modern cultivation is not necessary to bring men to a dead level, and to subdue all real greatness.

*Dunsford.* But you must admit that there is a certain smallness in the men of our time, and a foolish hurry in their proceedings.

*Milverton.* No: that is not exactly what we have reason to complain of, but rather a certain coldness, an undue care for respectability, and too much desire to be safe. One of our most observant men, who has seen a great deal of the world, and always desired to understand the generation under him as well as that which came before him, says, that the young men of the present day are better than the young men of his time; but there is one thing that he complains of in them, and that is, their fear of ridicule. To a certain extent he is right, I think; only I should modify his remark a little, and say, that it is not exactly that they fear ridicule, as they dislike to put themselves in such a position that they may justly be made ridiculous.

It is partly caution, partly fastidiousness, partly a fear of ridicule.

*Dunsford.* Well, then, I think that each man is more isolated than he used to be. There is less of clanship, less of the rallying round men of force or genius. How very rare a thing it is for one man to devote himself to the purposes framed by another's mind, or to give evidence of something like devotion to his person. Yet this would often be the wisest and the noblest form of exertion.

*Milverton.* But then there would be no originality, as they think, and there is now a diseased desire for originality, which is never to be got by the men who seek it. All the while the most original thing would be to be humble and subservient to great purposes, from whomsoever adopted.

At the same time, I must say that, as far as I have observed, the young would be very devoted to forward the purposes of their elders and superiors, whether in parliament, in offices, or in any other functions of civil life ; and I think that in our times, great fault has often been on the side of the elders in not making just use of the young talent lying everywhere about them.

*Dunsford.* That may be.

*Milverton.* Indeed, Dunsford, it is not every one

who, like yourself, is anxious to elicit the powers, and to carry forward the purposes, of younger men. It requires a great deal of kind-hearted imagination to do that.

*Dunsford.* You make too much of this, Milverton. It is natural that I should care about my own pupils more than anything else. I live in their doings.

*Milverton.* And in your new edition, that is to be, of the Second part of Algebra, as Ellesmere would say, if he were here: but to return to our subject, I will tell you, at least I will try and tell you, in a somewhat fanciful way, what I think of the whole matter.

Have you ever known well a beautiful bit of natural scenery, before man has come to settle in it—a cliff near the sea, a mead near a lake, or the outskirts of a noble forest? If so, you recollect the delicately-rounded, gracefully-indented, or grotesquely out-jutting forms, which the rock, or the hill, or the margin of the waters, or the outskirts of the wood had taken—forms dear to the painter and the poet. (Here Lucy entered the enclosure where we were sitting.)

*Lucy.* The painter and the poet—I am sure this is something which I may listen to, Mr Milverton; may I not?

*Milverton.* There are few persons, Lucy, who

have more feeling for the works of painters and poets ; and so you have a right to hear anything that is to be said about them. (I then repeated to her the former part of the sentence.) You then, perhaps, after an interval of many years, pass by the same place. A number of square white houses, poor in form and questionable in design, deface the beautiful spot. The delicate impressions of nature are gone, and, in their stead, are the angular marks of men's handiwork. The painter hurries by the place ; the poet, too, unless he is a very philosophic one, passes shuddering by. But, in reality, what forms of beauty, in conduct, in suffering, in endeavour ; what tragedies, what romances ; what footprints, as it were, angelic and demoniac—now belong to that spot. It is true, we have lost wonderful lichens and those exquisitely-coloured mosses on the rocks which were the delight of the artist. Perhaps there are now ungainly initials in their place, illustrative, however, of a deeper poetry than ever was there before. But I grow too fanciful, and must descend to prosaic explanations. I mean, in short, that though there is more cultivation (which, it must be confessed, effaces somewhat of the natural rugged beauty of the scene), there is also more of a higher beauty which sits beside the other (plain prosaic cultivation) always, though oft unken-  
 nelled by



mortal eyes. So, in the advancement of mankind, the great barbaric outlines are broken into, and defaced; but a thousand new beauties, new delicacies, even new greatnesses, take their place. Nature is ever affluent in such things; and this effect of cultivation is to be seen, not only in mankind, but in individual men. For instance, Dunsford, the very shyness and coldness of modern youth arises in some measure from the growth of tact and delicacy. But I need not explain further; you see what I mean.

*Dunsford.* I think I do; and as it is a charitable view, I wish to think it a true one. But I could object to your metaphor, if I chose to do so.

*Lucy.* And is it equally true, Mr Milverton, with the young ladies as with the young gentlemen?

*Milverton.* Why, my dear Lucy, the young ladies are always of course more in harmony with nature. Though women are more slavish to small conventionalities than men, the real advance of civilisation tells much less upon women than upon men. One, who knew them well, says that "The ideas of justice, of virtue, of vice, of goodness, of wickedness, float only on the surface of their souls (consequently the prevailing ideas amongst men on these subjects make comparatively little impression upon women), in the depths of which (their souls) they have 'Famour,

propre et l'intérêt personnel' (I quote his very words) with all the energy of nature; and, more civilised than ourselves from without, they have remained true savages within; (plus civilisées que nous en dehors, elles sont restées de vraies sauvages en dedans)."

*Lucy.* The man is a savage himself: he must be a French Mr Ellesmere.

*Milverton.* They are daring words, certainly; but perhaps they have a scintilla of truth in them. However, I will come again some day, and endeavour to elucidate these things a little further. Now I see the bees are flocking homewards with well-laden thighs, and I, too, must go back to my hive, well-laden with the wisdom to be gained from the thoughtful trees and beautiful flowers of the Rectory.

*Dunsford.*

" Et fessæ multâ referunt se nocte minores,  
Crura thymo plenæ: pascuntur et arbuta passim,  
Et glaucas salices, casiamque crocumque rubentem,  
Et pinguem tiliam, et ferrugineos hyacinthos.  
Omnibus una quies operum, labor omnibus unus."

*Milverton.* Now, Miss Lucy, you must translate. I know you do that with all your uncle's favourite bits: and to tell the truth, I have forgotten some of the words. What is tilia?

*Lucy.* You must not be very critical then, if I do translate, and ask for every word to be rendered.

Now homewards come, borne on the evening breeze,  
With heavy-laden thighs, the younger bees :  
Each in the arbutus has hid his head,  
In yellow willow-bloom, in crocus red,  
And the rich foliage which the lindens spread :  
One common labour each companion knows,  
And for the weary swarm is one repose.

*Milverton.* A little liberal, Lucy, but it gives some of the sense of the passage, I think; and you are a good girl for not making more fuss about letting me hear it. I really must go now; so good-by.

And so I walked homewards, thinking much of Dunsford's mild wisdom, and how beautiful it is to see old age gracefully filling its high vocation of a continually-enlarging sympathy with the young, and tolerance for them. As Goethe says, "A man has only to become old to be tolerant; I see no fault committed," he adds, "which I also might not have committed." But then it is a Goethe who is speaking. Dunsford has reached to the same level of toleration by sheer goodness of nature.

## CHAPTER XIII.

A LONG, solitary ride enabled me to-day\* to bring to a conclusion a chapter which I had been thinking of for some time. It is difficult for a man, unless he is a perfect horseman, to think connectedly during a ride, which ~~is the very~~ reason ~~why horse exercise~~ is so good for the studious and the busy; but the inspiring nature of the exercise may enable the rider to overcome special points of difficulty in any subject he is thinking over. In truth, a subject of any magnitude requires to be thought over in all moods of mind; and that alone is one great reason for maintaining thoughts long in mind, before expressing them in speech or writing, that they come to be considered and re-considered under all aspects, and to be modified by the various fortunes and states of temperament of the thinker.

There is all the difference between the thoughts of a man who is plodding\*homewards on his own legs, under an umbrella, and those of the same man who,

on horseback, is springing over the elastic turf, careless whether wind or rain drives against him or not, that there was between the after-dinner and the next morning councils of the ancient Germans.

And, indeed, the subject I was thinking of, needs to be considered in all weathers of the soul, for it is very large; and if I could present to other minds what comes under this subject in mine, I should have said a good deal of all that I may have to say on most subjects.

Without more introductory words, for a long introduction would be especially out of place in this case, the subject in question is the art of coming to an end.

Almost all human affairs are tedious. Everything is too long. Visits, dinners, concerts, plays, speeches, pleadings, essays, sermons, are too long. Pleasure and business labour equally under this defect, or, as I should rather say, this fatal superabundance.

It must not be supposed that tiresomeness belongs to virtue alone. Few people are more pedantic and tiresome than the vicious; and I doubt whether if one were thrown on a desert island, and had only the means of rescuing Blair's works and many fictions of decidedly bad tendency, but thought to be amusing,

one would not exclaim, "Blair for ever!" and hurl the fictions into their element, the water.

But let us trace this lengthiness, not only in the results of men's works, but in their modes of operation.

Which, of all defects, has been the one most fatal to a good style? The not knowing when to come to an end. Take some inferior writer's works. Dismiss nearly all the adjectives; when he uses many substantives, either in juxtaposition, or in some dependence on each other, reduce him to one; do the same thing with the verbs; finally, omit all the adverbs; and you will, perhaps, find out that this writer had something to say, which you might never have discovered, if you had not removed the superfluous words. Indeed, in thinking of the kind of writing that is needed, I am reminded of a stanza in a wild Arab song, which runs thus—

"Terrible he rode along,  
With his Yemen sword for aid;  
Ornament it carried none,  
But the notches on the blade." \*

So, in the best writing, only that is ornament which

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\* See *Tait's Magazine*, July 1850, for what seems to be an admirable translation of a most remarkable poem "of an age earlier than that of Mahomet."

shows some service done, which has some dint of thought about it.

Then there is a whole class of things which, though good in themselves, are often entirely spoilt by being carried out too far and inopportunately. Such are punctiliousness, neatness, order, labour of finish, and even accuracy. The man who does not know how to leave off, will make accuracy frivolous and vexatious. And so with all the rest of these good things, people often persevere with them so inaptly and so inopportunately as to contravene all their real merits. Such people put me in mind of plants which, belonging to one country and having been brought to another, persist in flowering in those months in which they, or their ancestors, were used to flower in the old country. There is one in a garden near me which in February delights to show the same gay colours for a day or two here, in these northern climes, with which it was wont to indulge the far-off-inhabitants of countries near the Black Sea. It is in vain that I have remonstrated with this precocious shrub about its showing its good qualities at so inappropriate a period; and in fact it can make so good an answer to any man who thus addresses it, that, perhaps, it is better to say nothing and pass by, thinking only of our own faults in this respect—and then, indeed, the shrub will

not have flowered quite in vain, if it has been only for a single day.

A similar error in not knowing when to leave off occurs in the exercise of the critical faculty, which some men use till they have deadened the creative : and, in like manner, men cavil and dissect and dispute till that which was merely meant as a means of discovering error and baffling false statement, becomes the only end they care about—the truth for them.

But a far more important field for this error of superabundance is in the vices of mankind. If men had but known when to leave off, what would have become of ambition, avarice, gluttony, quarrelling, cruelty? Men go on conquering for conquering's sake, as they do hoarding for hoarding's sake. If it be true that Marlborough went on gaining needless victories, wasting uncalled-for blood and treasure, what a contemptible thing it is ! I say, "if" he did so, for but a little investigation into history shows one how grievously men have been misrepresented ; and, not having looked into the matter, I will not take the responsibility of the accusation on myself. But the instance, if just, is an apt one ; and, certainly, there are many similar instances in great commanders to



bear it out. But what a contemptible application of talent it is, that a man should go on doing something very well which is not wanted, and should make work for himself that he may shine, or at least be occupied. It is absolutely childish. Such children have great conquerors been.

It is a grand thing for a man to know when he has done his work. How majestic, for instance, is the retirement of Sylla, Diocletian, and Charles the Fifth. These men may not afford particularly spotless instances, but we must make the most of those we have. There are very few men who know how to quit any great office, or to divest themselves of any robe of power.

How much, again, this error of not knowing when to leave off, pervades the various pursuits of men. How it is to be seen in art and literature ; how much too in various professions and various crafts. The end is lost sight of in a foolish exercise of some facility in dealing with the means ; as when a man goes on writing for writing's sake, having nothing more to tell us ; or when a man who exercises some craft moderately well for the sake of gain, confines himself to that craft and is a craftsman nowhere else, when the gain is no longer needful for him.

But it may be said, Why speak of the art of leaving off? the instances you have given might sometimes be put under the head of not knowing how to begin; or, at any rate, they might more legitimately come under the heads of the various evil passions and habits to which they seem to belong. I do not altogether deny this, but at the same time I wish to show that there is an art of leaving off which may be exercised independently, if I may so express it, of the various affections of the mind.

This art will depend greatly upon a just appreciation of form and proportion. Where this proportion is wanting in men's thoughts or lives, they become one-sided. The mind enters into a peculiar slavery, and hardens into a creature of mere habits and customs. The comparative youthfulness of men of genius, which has often been noticed, results from their having a finer sense of proportion than other men, which prevents their being enslaved by the things which gradually close up the avenues of the soul. They, on the contrary, hold to Nature till the last, and would partake, in some measure, if it may be so, of her universality.

I hardly know anything that serves to give us a greater notion of the importance of proportion than the fact made known to us by chymistry, that but a

few elements mingled together in different proportions give things of the most different nature (as we suppose) and different efficiency. This fact, after a consideration of the infinitely great as appreciated by the telescope, and the infinitely small as divulged by the microscope, is to my mind the most significant in physics.

I fear, without more explanation, I shall hardly make myself understood here. I mean that this fact in chymistry affords a high idea of the importance of proportion; and the error we have been considering is one that mainly arises from disproportion.

For instance, this want of power to leave off often shows an inadequate perception of the proportion which all proceedings here ought to bear to time. Everything is a function of time, as the mathematicians would well express it. Then only consider what needful demands there are on that time: what forms, compliments, civilities, offices of friendship, relationship, and duty, have to be transacted. Consider the interruptions of life. I have often thought how hardly these bear upon the best and most capable of men. Perhaps there are not many more than a thousand persons in the long roll of men who have done anything very great for mankind. Nations should have kept guard at their doors, as we fancy,

that they might work undisturbed ; but, instead of that, domestic misery, poverty, error, and affliction of all kinds no doubt disturbed and distracted them—not without its enlightenment, and not perhaps to be wholly regretted for their sakes. But has any one thing so misled them and counteracted their abilities so much as this want of proportion I am speaking of, arising from their ignorance or inability to leave off ? which has limited their efforts to one thing—has made the warrior a warrior only, incapable of dealing with his conquests ; the statesman a man of business and devices only, so that he gains power but cannot govern ; the man of letters a master of phrases only ; the man of so-called science a man, like the Greek philosophers, who could only talk about science—skilful in that, but never having left off that talking to make a single experiment.

But surely there might be a breadth of purpose and extent of pursuit without inane versatility. As things are, it is not often that you find any one who holds his art, accomplishment, function, or business, in an easy disengaged way, like a true gentleman, so that he can bear criticism upon his doings in it nobly or indifferently, who is other than a kind of pedagogue. Much more difficult is it to find a man who sees the work before him in its just proportions and does it,

yet does not make out of his work an obstacle to his perception of what besides is good and needful ; and who keeps the avenues of his mind open to influences other than those which immediately surround him.

I am ashamed when I think of the want of cultivation even in those who are reckoned most cultivated people ; and not so much of their want of cultivation, as their want of the power of continuous cultivation. Few, therefore, can endure leisure, or in fact can carry other burthens than those which they have been used to—like mules accustomed to carry panniers or pack-saddles in mountainous countries, which steer their way when free from their burthens just as if they still bore them, allowing always the distance between the rocks and themselves which was necessary to clear their loaded panniers ; a mode of proceeding which exceedingly alarms and astonishes the traveller mounted on these mules, till he understands the reason of it. Both men and mules are puzzled at having something new to undertake : and indeed the art of leaving off judiciously is but the art of beginning something else which needs to be done.

But if there is anything in which the beauty and the wisdom of knowing when to leave off is parti-

cularly manifested, it is in behaviour. And how rare is beautiful behaviour ; greatly by reason of the want of due proportion in the characters and objects of most persons, and from their want of some perception of the whole of things. Let any man run over in his mind the circle of his friends and acquaintances ; also, if he is a well-read man, of those whom he has become acquainted with in history or biography ; and he will own how few are, or have been, persons of beautiful behaviour, of real greatness of mind.

This greatness of mind which shows itself daily in behaviour, and also in conduct when you take the whole of a life, may co-exist with foibles, with stains, with perversities, with ignorance, with shortcomings of any and of every kind. But there is one thing which is characteristic of it, and that is, its freedom from limitation. No one pursuit, end, aim, or occupation permanently sullies its perceptions. It may be wicked for a time as David, cruel for a time as Cæsar, even false ; but these are only passing forms of mind ; and there is still room for virtue, piety, self-restraint, and clemency. Its intelligence is not a mirror obedient to private impulses that reflects only that which its will commands for the time ; but gives candidly some reflection of all that passes by. Hence, by God's blessing, it will know how to leave off ; whereas, on

the contrary, the mind which is hedged in by the circumstances and ideas of one passion, or pursuit, is painfully limited, be that passion or pursuit what it may.

Observe the calmness of great men, noting by the way, that real greatness belongs to no station and no set of circumstances. This calmness is the cause of their beautiful behaviour. Vanity, injustice, intemperance, are all smallnesses arising from a blindness to proportion in the vain, the unjust, and the intemperate. Whereas, no one thing, unless it be the love of God, has such a continuous hold on a great mind as to seem all in all to it. The great know, unconsciously, more of the real beneficent secret of the world : there is occasional repose of soul for them. How can such men be subdued by money, be enclosed by the ideas of a party, or a faction, be so shut up in a profession, an art, or a calling, as to see nought else, or to believe only in one form of expression for what is beautiful and good ?

Passing by a mountain stream, I once beheld an unfortunate trunk of a tree, which, having been shot down the side of a hill, and thus sent on, as the custom is in those countries, down the stream to find its way to the haven, had unfortunately come too near a strong eddy, which caught it up and ever whirled it

back again. How like the general course of man ! I thought. Down came the log with apparent vigour and intent each time, and it seemed certain that it would drive onwards in the course designed for it ; but each time it swirled round and was sent back again. Ever and anon it came with greater force, described a wider arc, and surely now, I thought, it will shoot down on its way ; but no, it paused for a moment, felt the influence of its fatal eddy, and then returned with the like force it had come down with. I waited and waited, groups of holiday-making people passed by me wondering, I daresay, what I stayed there to see ; but unmindful of any of us, it went on performing its circles. I returned in the evening ; the poor log was still there, busy as ever in not going onwards ; and I went upon my journey, feeling very melancholy for this tree, and thinking there was little hope for it. It may even now be at its vain gyrations, knowing no rest, and yet making no advance to the seas for which it was destined.

So let it not be with us : caught up by no mean eddies which draw us to the side of the stream and compel us to revolve in the same narrow circlet of passion, of prejudice, of party, of ambition, of desire ; finding in constancy no limitation, in devotedness of pursuit no narrowness of heart, or thought, or creed ;



choosing as the highway of our career one which widens and deepens ever as we move along it ; let us float on to that unmeasured ocean of thought and endeavour where the truly great in soul (often great because humble, for it is the pride of man which keeps him to small purposes and prevents his knowing when to leave off with earthly things), where the truly and the simply great shall find themselves in kindred waters of far other depth than those which they were first launched out upon.

After writing down the foregoing thoughts upon the art of coming to an end, which had been the subject of my morning's ride, I went out upon the lawn to refresh myself with the evening air. It was very clear : the stars and the moon were in all their splendour ; and the shadows of the trees lay quietly upon the grass, as if the leaves, for the most part so restless, were now sleeping on their stems, like the birds upon the branches.

I had resolved that this reverie, a fitting one to conclude with, should be the last of which I would give an account. There is something sad about the end of anything, whether it be the building of a palace, the construction of a great history, like that of Gibbon, the finishing of a child's baby-house, or the conclusion of some small, unpretending work in

literature. The first feelings of an author soon pass by. Those hopes and those fears which quite agitate the young pretender to fame, are equally dulled by failure or success. Meanwhile, the responsibility of writing does not grow less, at least in any thoughtful mind. With the little knowledge we have on any subject, how we muster audacity to write upon it, I hardly know.

These signs, too, that we use for communicating our thoughts, which we call language, what a strange débris it is of the old languages—a result of the manifold corruptions of childish prattle, of the uncouth talk of soldiers sent into conquered provinces, of the vain efforts of rude husbandmen to catch an unfamiliar tongue. And, if we went back to the old languages, with equal knowledge of their antecedents, we should probably find that they also were lamentable gatherings from forgotten tongues, huts out of the ruins of palaces.

So much for the vehicle in which we convey our thoughts, imperfect enough in themselves.

Then, if we turn to the people, the manners, the customs, and the laws we have to act upon with these thoughts, there, too, what a mass of confusion is presented to us, collected from all parts of the earth and from all periods of history.

As I thought of this, I seemed to see the various races who had occupied this very spot flit by—Briton, Roman, Saxon, Norman, each with his laws, manners, and customs imprinted on his bearing, the wrecks of mighty empires shown in the very accoutrements of each shadowy form as it went by. And this mass of strangely-mingled materials is the substance that these imperfect thoughts expressed in imperfect language have to act upon.

And, then, what say these stars with their all-eloquent silence, seeming to reduce all our schemes into nothings, to make our short-lived perplexities ludicrous, ourselves and our ways like a song that is not sung? What a cold reply they seem to give to all human works and questionings.

But, said I to myself, such trains of thought may easily be pursued too far ; we must not bring in the immensities about us and within us to crush our endeavours. Here we are ; let stars, or bygone times, or the wrecks of nations, or the corruptions of language, say or show what they will. There is something also to be done by us : we have our little portions of the reef of coral yet to build up. If we have not time to become wise, we have time enough

to become resigned. If we have rude and confused material to work upon, and uncouth implements to work with, less must be required from us ; and, as for these stars, the true meaning to be got from them is in reality an encouraging one.

Some men have thought that one star or planet befriended them ; some, another. This man grew joyful when the ascendant star of his nativity came into conjunction with Jupiter, favourable to his destinies ; and that man grew pale when his planet came into opposition with Saturn, noxious to his horoscope, threatening the “House of Life.” Nor is astrology extinct : science only lends it more meaning, but not a private one for kings or potentates. These stars say something very significant to all of us : and each man has the whole hemisphere of them, if he will but look up, to counsel and befriend him. In the morning time, they come not within ken, when they would too much absorb our attention, and hinder our necessary business, but in the evening, they appear to us, to chasten over-personal thoughts, to put down what is exorbitant in earth-bred fancies, and to encourage those endeavours and aspirations which meet with no full response from any single planet, certainly not from the one we are on, but which derive their meaning and their end from the vastness

and the harmony of the whole of God-directed nature and of life.

So thinking, I was enabled for a moment to see, or rather to feel, that the threads of our poor human affairs, tangled as they seem to be, might yet be interwoven harmoniously with the great cords of love and duty that bind the universe together. And so I returned to the house, and said "Good night" cheerfully to the friendly stars, which did not now seem to oppress me by their magnitude, or their multitude, or their distance.

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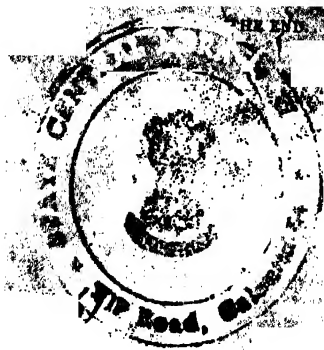


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